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Forked tongues...p.6

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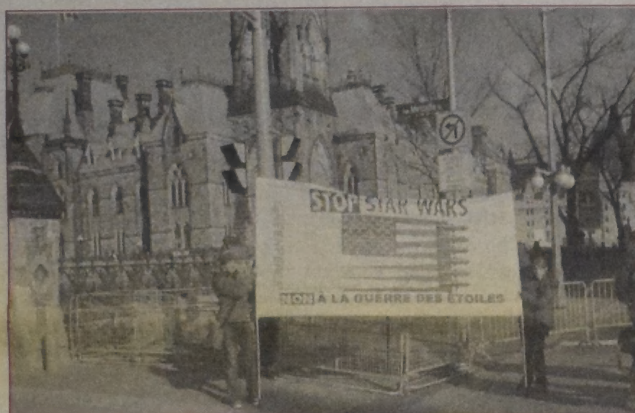


Bush invites Canada to participate in creation of missile shield

Harry der Nederlanden

During his visit to Canada US President George Bush sought to defuse some of the tensions that have arisen between the two countries over the last few years. However, his pitch to gain Canadian participation in the so-called missile shield during a speech in Newfoundland thanking Canadians for their hospitality to Americans during 9-11 didn't seem to help that cause. Although Canadians generally seemed to respond favorably to the Bush visit, there is considerable resistance to the missile shield program among Canadians. Many still associate it with the grandiose "Star Wars" scheme conceived by Ronald Reagan in the early 80s, and many others associate it with Bush's alleged militancy. The present program, however, was supported by Clinton and even by Kerry in his recent run for the presidency.

The missile shield program, sometimes referred to as "Son of Star Wars," long predates the George Bush presidency. When it was first conceived under the presidency of Reagan, the world was a very different place, and the threat came from very different quarters than it does today. When Reagan announced the hugely ambitious idea, since none of the technology necessary for it yet existed, it was greeted as something of a far-fetched science fiction concept. It included the fantasy of laser weapons mounted on satellites capable of zapping intercontinental ballistic missiles shortly after they had lifted off. This would have involved putting weapons out in space, hence the frequent allusion by critics to the "weaponization of space." Although the phrase keeps being used, the missile shield under dis-



Demonstrators near Parliament Hill during the Bush visit

cussion now involves no weapons circling the earth on satellites.

PM Martin has often said that, although he favors cooperation

with the US in continental defense, he draws the line at the weaponization of space. In August of this year Defence Minister Bill

Graham announced that Canada was involved in monitoring against possible missile attacks launched against North America through its participation in NORAD, the 50-year-old defence pact of the North American Aerospace Command with headquarters in Colorado. Canadian personnel are involved in operating the radar and satellite equipment linked to a number of sites around the world. In his announcement, Graham stressed that this involvement did not commit Canada to participate in the Missile Shield program and that the government was keeping its options open till the issue was discussed in parliament.

All Canadian politicians except the NDP leader Jack Layton says

they have only a vague idea what is actually involved in Canadian co-operation with the US initiative so they are suspending judgment for the time being, but the Conservatives are stressing that the government should not enter into such a program without taking it to parliament. This is bound to create tensions within the Liberal Party, as some Liberals are vehemently opposed to such participation in almost any form. Some have even threatened to vote against the party if necessary. Layton claims that Colin Powell told him the Americans are indeed planning the weaponization of space.

A lot of the opposition to Canada's cooperation in the missile shield program is...
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Reforming North Korea

Elizabeth Kendal

On October 18, 2004, President G.W. Bush signed the North Korea Human Rights Act into law. The law, which will be effective from 2005 to 2008, grants \$2 million a year to groups supporting human rights, democracy and a market economy in North Korea, and allocates \$20 million a year to help settle North Korean refugees. The law also calls for doubling American radio broadcasting to North Korea to 12 hours a day and smuggling radios into North Korea. It will ensure that human rights are on the agenda when negotiating.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) welcomed the move. USCIRF Chair Preeta D. Bansal notes, "The human rights violations of the Kim Jong Il regime are among the most serious worldwide. The North Korea Human Rights Act makes improv-

ing human rights protections a priority in U.S. relations with North Korea. And, it gives U.S. policy-makers tools to act on that priority." (USCIRF, Oct 19, 2004)

However, not everyone has welcomed the North Korea Human Rights Act with enthusiasm. As was expected, the North Korean regime is unimpressed and has vowed not to take part in regional talks over its nuclear weapons program until the "hostile" law is repealed.

Protests from South Korea

Tension over the Act is however, most acute in South Korea. Lee Bu-young, the Chairman of the ruling Uri Party, has expressed



Korean mother with children

UNESCO PHOTO

"grave" concerns, fearing that the Act is designed to hasten the collapse of North Korea and that could be catastrophic for the Korean Peninsula. After the Act was passed by the US Senate, Lee said, "I am looking at the issue with grave concern because it could

negatively affect inter-Korean relations and the six-way talks. It's a foregone conclusion that the situation surrounding the Korean peninsula will be aggravated further." (Korean Times, Sept 30, 2004)

South Korea's main political opposition however, the Grand National Party (GNP), has embraced the act and harshly criticised Uri Party members for "placing inter-Korean ties ahead of human rights." The GNP has hailed the Act as a major step forward toward liberating oppressed and impoverished North Koreans.

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News

North Korea *continued from p. 1*

The North Korean Human Rights Acts is wonderful in principle. However, the specific and unique realities of the tenuous "peace" on the Korean Peninsula and the unique nature of the North Korean regime – headed by a Communist dictator who came to power through dynastic succession, who is surrounded by an enormous military, and who might actually believe the myths and fantasies he spins and perpetuates – makes dealing with the regime an extremely difficult and delicate exercise.

The implementation of the Act will need to be as sensitive as the defusing of a bomb. North Korea cannot be treated the same as Belarus (for example), for with North Korea the risks are much greater and the stakes are much higher. It requires great urgency in prayer and great delicacy, patience, and intelligent, sensitive strategy on the ground.

Searching for openings

After the horrific explosion in Ryongchon on April 23, 2004 caused by a train wreck, a WEA RL Prayer bulletin was issued calling for prayer for the victims and for the tragedy to be a means by which the door into North Korea might be further opened. The final paragraph of that prayer bulletin stated: "There is no civil society in North Korea, no political opposition, and after 50 years of anti-world propaganda the people are quite brainwashed. Most have known no other life and know NO truth. North Korean society no longer has any foundations, so that regime collapse could be disastrous. What the nation really needs is to open up and be transformed from within. God alone can work that miracle."

However, Kathi Zellweger of the Catholic aid organisation Caritas believes North Korea is slowly changing and an entrepreneurial spirit developing but Pyongyang is presently in a "stop phase" while authorities assess how market reforms have affected the communist system so far. Zellweger says, "Regime change is what some groups of people hope for. But I believe what is happening is that very slowly the nature of the regime is changing, albeit at a very slow pace." Zellweger fears the North Korea Human Rights Act will lead to a tightening of the government's

control of the people and of NGOs. (Reuters report, Nov16)

Cooperation between north and south

Kaesong industrial park in North Korea is 10 km north of the de-militarised zone (DMZ) and 90 km by highway from South Korea's Incheon Airport. It is the invention of South Korean economic strategists who envisaged it as a means of pulling South Korea out of its economic doldrums. The South Korean government supports it because of its potential to increase cross-border ties, improve relations, and gradually lessen the economic disparity between the north and south, thus easing the way for reunification.

About 230 South Korean officials, businessmen, ruling and opposition lawmakers and journalists took part in the official opening of the Kaesong industrial park on October 20, 2004. Kaesong, which opened with 13 South Korean manufacturers, will be funded by the south but staffed by the north. As *Straits Times Interactive* notes, "North Koreans could be working in South Korean factories by the end of this year." Presently 130 Seoul companies are on a waiting list to open factories in Kaesong, which is expected to eventually draw billions of dollars in investments and employ 730,000 North Koreans and 100,000 South Koreans in more than 1,000 South Korean companies. (STI Oct 21, 2004)

The famine and the people

The North Korean famine of the 1990s, which occurred as a result of poor governance, produced an immense amount of grief and suffering. An article by Andreas Lorenz entitled "Joyful Dancing," in *Der Spiegel*, reports that the people have grown tired of suffering and brutal oppression. Lorenz mentions a new book about North Korea by Jasper Becker, a British journalist living in Beijing, who writes that factories, military units, and even entire towns revolted against the leadership in Pyongyang during the years of famine and suffering. These rebellions have been brutally crushed and, according to Becker, "Resentment against Kim is deeply entrenched in the population," also among elements of the military. This is no doubt why 100,000 elite guards are required to guarantee

Interview with a North Korean Christian leader

The following interview is with a Christian leader from North Korea, whom we will call "Pastor North" for security reasons. It needs to be said that it is impossible for anyone to evaluate fully the outlook in that nation. Pastor North however has excellent contacts and many personal channels of information. This interview was initially published on November 15, 2004 by Global Voice.

Global Voice (GV): How do you see the situation in North Korea today?

Pastor North (PN): It is becoming increasingly dangerous for several reasons. Our government considers the talk about "the axis of evil," the new US law on North Korea and the re-election of President Bush as real threats. 'We are on the same latitude as Iraq and the next country could be North Korea,' said one influential person. North Korea argues that they also must have "the right to strike first." So my understanding is that there is a real danger of war and that it would be a disaster for both North and South Korea. Demonstrations in the South against the changes to the National Security Law are also seen as a hostile activity.

GV: How then in your opinion should the West deal with North Korea?

PN: Our government has two faces. One is the face of a nation that does whatever we want without caring at all about international opinion. I understand this face has created a lot of negative reaction in the West. The other is the face of negotiating. This face is open for talks and suggestions but usually needs two or three months to give an answer. The difficulty is the two faces are on the same head and each affects the other.

GV: Do you see any positive changes in North Korea?

PN: Yes, I can see some changes. The government wants to open up just 'a little bit' for private enterprise. People can now for the first time sell their own produce. They cannot buy products to process and sell, but they can grow vegetables or fruit and sell them in the market place. This is a very small opening for private enterprise but we expect the door to open up more. There has also been a lot of cultural, economic and sporting exchange with South Korea in the last few years. Also, an industrial zone in the south of our country is being built in partnership with South Korea. That too will be an interesting project.

GV: What is the situation for the Christian Church?

PN: As you know, there are a few official churches and they have received a number of theological books in recent years. There are many people in these churches about whom we really know little, but there are also members who have

been Christians for 40 or 50 years. Most Christians of course meet in their homes, but it is impossible to say more than there is a house-church movement in our country. Many Christians are in prison, but I also know many Christians who are not and I think the State knows they are Christians. The most common comment of course on this question and many others is "we do not know," as there is practically no communication.

GV: So, what can Christians in the West do?

PN: There are two important things. The first one is to pray for the Church in North Korea, and the other is to build bridges and help our country. It would be so important for our government to understand that Christians in the West want to be the friends of our people and not supporters of a hostile policy against us. So visits by church delegations bringing help would be a step in the right direction.

GV: Do you see any changes coming soon?

PN: No, because there is no Opposition in this country and absolutely no network to co-ordinate any demand for changes. The strong feeling amongst people is that we are under threat of attack. That unites us, as well as the media giving just one version of both the national and the international situation. Radios are made so that we are able to listen only to North Korean radio stations.

GV: What if the leader should die?

PN: First of all we would not know about it for a long time. By then I am sure that the leading elite would have appointed a new leader. Our country is really based on a sort of caste system. The workers are the lowest caste and the highest castes are the generals and the political elite who have many advantages. They live a very good life with everything they need. They would not risk losing their position and in the common interest of that caste they would choose a new leader amongst themselves, to avoid any loss of privilege.

GV: What is your hope for the future?

PN: That has an easy answer – *peace*! Our country is very poor and people are suffering. Should war would break out, the terrible suffering that would bring to the Korean peninsula is inconceivable. And not only that, such a war could trigger an even wider conflict. What would China do in such a situation? [A South Korean military report presented to parliament October 5 reported that China has said it would send 400,000 troops, 800 aircraft and 150 navy vessels to support its ally North Korea if war broke out on the Korean Peninsula. SCMP 6 Oct 2004 – EK] As followers of Jesus Christ we must all work for peace and for the well-being of the ordinary people God has created.

Kim's survival.

Those things Kim Jong-Il desires most of all, survival and prestige, appear to be on shaky ground according to even the most recent reports. Maybe this is the biggest bargaining chip of all. To avoid catastrophe on the Korean Penin-

sula, would the US be willing to ensure Kim's survival and prestige in exchange for reforms for which Kim would of course take all credit? This would involve great humility on the part of the US. It would involve leaving justice regarding Kim in the hands of God.

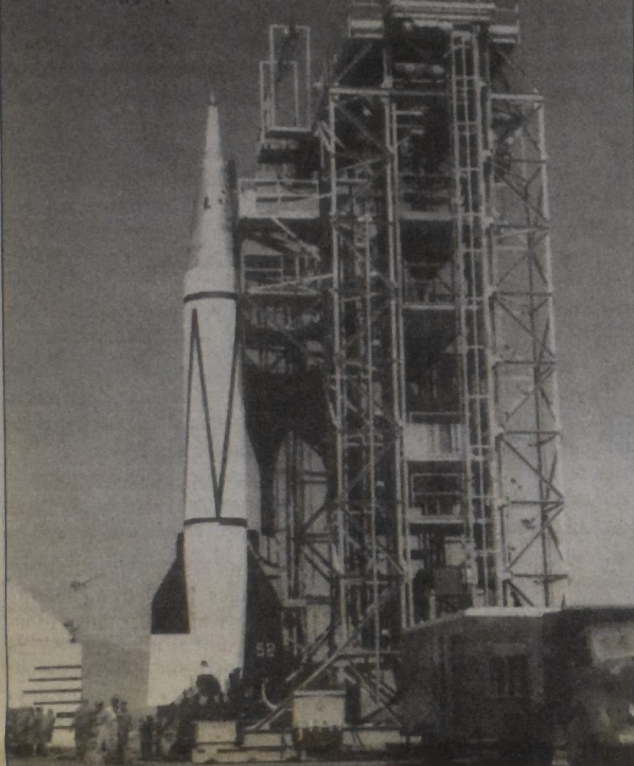
It could only be done by looking past the man, Kim Jong-Il, and keeping eyes firmly fixed on the goal: the liberation and reform of North Korea, for the sake of North Korea's suffering and oppressed millions.

Elizabeth Kendal is the Principal Researcher and Writer for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty News & Analysis.

Politics

Missile Shield *continued from p.1*

Missile being prepared for launch



sile shield comes from those who regard almost any level of spending on weaponry as militarism. Supporters, on the other hand, claim that it will cost Canada little or nothing, whether in money, manpower or territory, but that spurning the US in this effort to increase security will greatly harm Canada-US relations. Americans see the shield as part of their attempt to protect themselves against terrorists and rogue nations like North Korea or Iran. Analysts in the US frequently mention the possibility of a terrorist group getting hold of badly guarded weaponry from the break-up of the Soviet Union or from a country like Pakistan. While it may be possible to conceal a nuclear device in a briefcase, however, an intercontinental ballistic missile is hard to hide under your coat. Still, Americans have a right to be a little paranoid, for since 9-11 Islamic terrorists have not stopped looking for ways to deliver more punishing blows to America. Perhaps most Canadians are too complacent about the threat from such militants.

The question raised by the missile shield is this: Is Canada being asked to commit to a program that is largely science fiction – and prodigiously expensive – that is, are

we buying a pig in a poke for a bucketful of bucks, or are we joining something far more modest, something, in fact, like we've participated in before?

Ballistic missiles are the distant cousins to the German V-2 rockets that British fighter pilots tried to shoot out of the air before they could strike British cities. During the Second World War the British also tethered large balloons around cities in an attempt to intercept the V-2 rockets. Today's missiles, of course, travel thousands of miles, and they have nuclear warheads that can obliterate entire cities. They can travel such huge distances because they are launched up beyond the atmosphere, thus, into outer space. One can argue, therefore, that space was already weaponized in the 60's, when these missiles were first developed.

Over the years, during the Cold War era, the US attempted to develop various defences against missile attacks. None were in the end judged feasible, either because they would be prohibitively expensive or because they could not possibly cope with large numbers of sophisticated incoming missiles.

Under Nixon, the nuclear strategy reverted to MAD – mutually assured destruction. Enemies of the US knew that if they attacked

The March-April issue of *Citizens for Public Justice's Catalyst* magazine carried an article by Janet Somerville warning against "a ruinously costly shield" as well as an open letter by Ernie Regehr addressed to Canada's PM urging us not to support or participate in the US ballistic defense program. He argues that it will prompt Russia and China to upgrade their weaponry, that real progress comes through diplomacy, not technology, and that Canada will have no control over a missile shield.

Regehr urges Canadians to oppose any effort to weaponize space and to pursue "alternative approaches to dealing with the ballistic missile threat."

Regehr concludes: "Canadian policy should recognize that the ballistic missile threat is a global phenomenon that requires a global approach; that a secure and stable 'Fortress North America' is not achievable in an international environment of nuclear weapons

the US, the latter would still be able to launch enough missiles to destroy the aggressor. Recall that critics used to say that each party had enough firepower to vaporize everyone on earth several times over.

The missile shield program already being put in place in California and Alaska envisions no such large scale attacks and is therefore much more modest. It is designed to address the possibility of one or a few, relatively unsophisticated missiles launched by a terrorist group or by a rogue state like North Korea. At present it includes only 20 interceptor missiles.

Nevertheless, even a program of such modest ambitions has already cost billions to develop and will cost billions more. Even those who favor spending more money on security against the threat of Islamist terrorists question whether spending it on a missile shield provides the best security for the bucks. The technology has not proven to be very effective yet, and it will perhaps never be able to provide reliable protection even against a handful of missiles. But even if a reliable shield were to be developed eventually, critics argue that terrorists are much more likely to smuggle a nuclear device into the country by way of the relatively insecure ports. Better to spend the money on port security, they say. The missile shield would

and ICBM proliferation; that North American protection from ballistic missile threats requires that their use be prevented and their spread be limited; that preventing their use and spread means multilateral diplomacy that also addresses the political and security conditions that currently produce incentives to seek nuclear weapons and the means to threaten them over intercontinental distances...."

In a *Capital Commentary* published by the Center for Public Justice about three years ago, Lynn D. Robinson argued that it is time to open discussion about the possibilities of creating a better ballistic missile defense system and that it can be done without alarming Russia and China and starting another arms race. Given the access of rogue states to missile technology, defending against such possibilities is prudent. It will not be a panacea and no one expects it to be perfect, but it is neither idola-

trous nor stupid. Developing better technologies can be done responsibly.

Calvin professor James Bradley, a mathematician, recently spent a year working for the US State Department thinking about missile defense.

"My initial attitude (toward missile defense)," he said, "was negative. In fact, I thought it was a really bad idea. But I changed my mind."

He was persuaded of its necessity by the proliferation of missile technology, which has made it easily available to all sorts of possible aggressors. "In 10 to 15 years," he says, "missiles will be available to any nation that wants them. Right now missiles are a status symbol for some countries. And for others they're a threat that they hold out. But with a missile defense system the threat goes away. Why would Libya buy an ICBM if they knew we could prevent them from using it successfully?"

be like putting a steel roof on your house while the burglar enters through the basement window.

Critics have also warned that the missile shield will spark another arms race. At first Russia and China were adamantly opposed to the idea. American assurances that it is wholly defensive in nature seems to have mollified them somewhat. Some developments of military technology are actually designed to limit mayhem and destruction in warfare.

Organizations like Citizens for Public Justice and Ploughshares warn that the quest for security by means of ever more expensive technology can also undermine global security by diverting funds from much needed projects to help bring greater prosperity and stability to poor countries in the southern hemisphere. Instead of reinforcing

your doors and windows, the money is better spent to make friends with your neighbors.

Unfortunately, neighbors like Al Qaeda are not easily charmed by development projects. If it is not going to cost Canadians anything, why should they object to improving the defense capabilities of NORAD? There is at the same time a disarmament program going on in which the US is dismantling nuclear missiles and is even paying some of the costs of dismantling missiles in the former Soviet Union. Of course, Canada does well to warn the US that it does not have a bottomless purse and that if the country bankrupts itself in an obsessive pursuit of security by ruinously costly means, it will certainly undermine not only its own security but the security of Canada and many other countries as well.

May the Peace and Joy of Christ be Yours

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his

glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." Colossians 1:10-12



*Thanking God for His estate plan for our lives.
From my family to yours. Merry Christmas!*

Clarence Weima
London, Ontario

1-800-488-9817

Editorial

Holidays and memories

Harry der Nederlanden

The holiday season is a time of remembering. We recollect previous family celebrations and reenact favorite old rituals, sing familiar Christmas songs, prepare dishes our parents and grandparents taught us to enjoy and exchange memories of previous times. For New Years we retrace the news stories of the year just past and wonder where the time is going: we wonder at how quickly it flew by and we wonder where it's all headed.

A holiday is as such always a repetition of a memory, the completion of a cycle. Holidays come around every year again. And they are associated with certain ritual commemorations that remind us of a larger history.

At Christmas Christians reflect on the center of time and history – the coming of God in the flesh to redirect the unfolding history not just of humanity but of the whole cosmos and to enfold it in his love. New Years is perhaps a more arbitrary marker, but it is related to the cycles of the seasons and the planets. And these are also in the providential care of our sovereign God. We might think of New Years as a celebration of God's common grace and Christmas as the celebration of his special grace – if those terms weren't so dicey.

The holiday season is a time for re-collection also in the sense that we collect or gather up what has been scattered, diffuse, forgotten and we bring the pieces together into a whole. Or, at least, we attempt to do so. We gather our thoughts like we gather our family and friends.

Storytelling is indispensable for this time of the year, and we have traditions of writing special Christmas stories and poems. The history of Western art also delivers a rich heritage of paintings that seeks to draw together the big story on a single canvas, and oratorios like Handel's Messiah similarly seek to sum up the whole of sacred history into one jubilant song of praise.

In spite of all the busyness, I love this season – if only for all the creative energies it has unleashed in the arts. Only romantic love and springtime rival this time of year in their power to inspire music and poetry. Both have, of course, also produced tons of kitsch, sentimental stories, poems and songs that encourage self-indulgence and nostalgia.

Writing a Christmas story

Let's admit it, although the Christmas stories we read and write are heart-warming, most of them are hardly great art. They tend to be trite and sentimental, driven by the need to make the plot end on a warm Christmas note. The truly great works of art for the most part depict the original Christmas story, and they make us part of it by the way they draw us in. Sometimes that is done quite literally: we see kings and soldiers at the manger in many paintings of the Adoration that are contemporary with the painter not the time of Caesar Augustus, or shepherds that aren't poor Jewish shepherds but English shepherds, as in the Medieval Second Shepherd's Play.

I have long had an itch to try writing a Christmas story and finally did so this year. I found myself struggling with how to avoid easy sentimentality. At last I just went with the clichéd plot, but then sought to weave other themes across the grain of the plot to put obstacles on the route to the happy ending. The themes of displacement and being a stranger struck me as closely related to Christmas, so I chose immigrants as my characters, drawing on my own memory of those days. The star and the angels in Luke brought the entire cosmos to the Bethlehem manger, so I looked for a way to do that. And while I was at it, I thought why not bring in the animals as well – hence the wolf-dog. Since gift-giving is, for good or ill, inevitably associated with the great gift of God's Son, I looked for a way to make the gift represent the best of our workmanship, a sharing of self. All the music and art that people have created over the centuries are gifts epitomized in Jesus.

But Christmas is light and life superimposed against darkness and death. If we don't remind ourselves of the alienation that made his coming necessary, our remembering remains superficial, a mere shot of spirits to warm the blood and give ourselves a glow.

There's nothing wrong with seeking a glow. The love of God poured out into the flesh and fibre of our existence, into our personal lives, into our families, into our communities and beyond, into the whole cosmos should fill us with a deep warmth.

This kind of remembering seeks to gather together all the threads of our lives into a story rooted in God's greatest act of reconciliation. In Christ he unites all our stories and all the histories of the nations and all the various dimensions of our cultural handiworks and imbues them with his Spirit. Somehow he purifies them and makes them all sparkle to his greater glory.

That vague little word "somehow" is important. We really cannot paint the whole picture or tell the whole story. That's why our own Christmas stories usually seem so contrived. Often they introduce a marvelous event, a miracle or transformation. But, then, Christmas is the greatest miracle of all. And it transformed history from beginning to end.

Still, our stories don't really show what they strive to show, they can only suggest or allude to connections with the big story still being enacted by God. We're participants in that story, but seeing God-in-us and in our midst is not always easy. We can only confess it, confessing at the same time that we see only darkly because our hearts are still darkened by sin. Nevertheless, we can rejoice in what has been revealed to us, and that fills us with a sure, well-grounded hope. It makes our day, our week, our year, our lives.

Although time is fleeting, we know where it is going, for the main plot is the redemption of all things in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remembering with others

This week I attended a lecture by Father Raymond de Souza at the Grimsby office of the CLAC. He traced the development of Catholic social thought. It begins especially in the 19th century in reaction to the sufferings of the working classes and seeks to counter the influence of both liberalism and socialism. In his survey, De Souza traced the gradual accumulation of more and more themes in the Church's understanding of the relationship between the individual believer and his role in society. What gradually emerged was a fuller picture of the Christian's identity as he stands in relation to his fellow citizens and the state.

As De Souza traced that history into the present with the encyclicals of John Paul II, he was in effect constructing an ever more detailed portrait or model of what it means to be a citizen according to Catholic social teaching. I was struck by how closely that story paralleled the story of Reformed reflection on the same journey.

De Souza was performing an act of re-remembering. He was collecting various pieces provided by different popes to create a unified portrait. To be sure, it gave an admittedly incomplete portrait of the person, for a person is more than a citizen. But what he did is a good example of the role remembering plays in our lives. We are not simply individuals who begin from square one at birth and then grow into self-sufficient, self-reliant atoms. We develop into persons and into a large number of roles by being fashioned according to traditions and histories, first within the family and then in larger relationships. It's a process of being formed, acquiring character, but also of forming one's own identity.

By participating in holidays, by remembering the history that made us what we are and that gave shape to our society and our world, we are renewing our roots and reminding ourselves of who we are. We are doing the spiritual equivalent of push ups – getting ourselves in shape. It may not feel that way after we've eaten all that rich food and sitting around too much visiting with friends and family. But there's more to being a person than sculpting new bodies and to fashioning a cool lifestyle and image: there's also the part where we abandon or entrust ourselves to just being – being a child of God.

What this requires is celebration, celebration of God as our maker, who continues to lovingly fashion us in his image – if only we entrust ourselves to him in faith. In the final analysis, we really cannot make something of ourselves. We need him to make something of us, and that isn't always a painless process.

In fact, it can be downright scary. We Reformed Christians are always busy shaping ourselves and our traditions, institutions and culture, so much so that we are often filled with anxiety. Look at how hard those Kuiperians in the Netherlands worked to give concrete expression to their faith, and how little of it is now left. What wind blew it all into the North Sea? Western culture, deeply influenced by Christianity, has given us much that is worthwhile handing down to our kids, but all around us we see that tradition vilified as violent and repressive. Will it all come to nought?

And then we contemplate that helpless baby in the manger. One day those who loved him thought his life had come to nought too, and suddenly he was there beside them and in the midst of them. And since then his story has become the story of his people.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca

Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden
subscriptions@christiancourier.ca

Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer
ads@christiancourier.ca

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Christian Courier

1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

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Letters

Vandezande calls for political integrity in U.S.-Canada relations

[Gerald Vandezande's letter was written prior to the Bush visit and we skip the part anticipating that meeting.]

...It will be most interesting not only to hear the protestant President's historic address but also to listen to our catholic Prime Minister's candid response at this critical juncture in U.S.-Canada relations. Especially now that the "Potent mix of faith and politics" and "Harnessing religion for political gain" (as described by Star columnist Rick Anderson, the former campaign director for the Reform party, Oct. 14 and 21) are debated.

The operative assumption by too many politicians and pundits is that people's faith-perspectives should be kept private when it comes to the development of public policies. As if any thoughtful citizen, journalist or politician could isolate or separate his/her core beliefs, basic convictions or fundamental principles and values from influencing forthright discussions about the vital importance of the common good.

In this political context, given his commendable commitment to help ensure quality health care for all Canadians, the PM may want to consider what the Catholic Health Association of Canada has stated regarding "the basic ethical principles involved in building a healthy economy and society."

Specifically, "respect for the value and the dignity of the human person lies at the

center of a healthy economy and society. Since all persons are made in the image of God, they have an inalienable right to the basic needs of life, namely the right to adequate food, clothing, shelter, employment, education, health care, a clean environment and the right to participate in decisions affecting these rights. This is what is known as the principle of the common good. In effect, all persons in a given society, should have, as a fundamental human right, common access to and use of those resources, goods and services that make for a more fully human life."

This inclusive understanding of what constitutes the common good of all, based on public justice for all (without discrimination) would clarify Canada's unique identity as an independent nation and help build mutually-respectful relations between good neighbors.

Will the PM and our Parliament show their Constitutional obligation and public sense of institutional responsibility to work conscientiously for "peace, order and good government" for the sake of full-fledged justice for all people, both at home and abroad? Vulnerable peoples' lives hang in the balance; consequently, political integrity is at issue.

Gerald Vandezande, CM
Scarborough Ontario

The church, investment and capitalism

A news item in the *Banner* of Nov. 2004 regarding the recovery of former IRM investments was a painful reminder of what we thought were questionable investment practices. [Several agencies of the CRC invested in IRM, a California real estate company that went bankrupt in 1997.] For a church agency to have a financial surplus is one thing, but to invest millions in a venture that is subject to "the vagaries of the marketplace" is quite another.

What dismayed us at the time of the IRM collapse was an almost total absence of voices of protest or calls for introspection. Instead, all we saw was damage control.

It now appears that some losses will be "recouped." Yes, there is sadness: "Some people lost a lot of money." Many smaller investors decided to settle for 40 cents on the dollar. The larger stakeholders had to wait it out. Apparently they may recover all of their original investment. An irony here?

We have long believed that there is something fundamentally wrong with a financial system that allows money to make money with money. Financial wizards continue to invent new "instruments" that they can play: hedge funds, junk bonds, in-and-out trading, churn rates. Ultimately it must lead to an unreal reality: a "virtually" naked emperor.

Lotteries were to be shunned: they fostered greed, addiction. Stockbrokers generally agree that markets are driven by greed, fear and trust.

Why is there no indignation with the alleged corporate crime committed by those in charge of Long Term Capital Management, Enron, Nortel, Corel, World-Com, Imclone, Adelphia? Mr. Eliot Spitzer is not accepting any new patients!

The same *Banner* issue reports that the World Alliance of Reformed Churches publicly denounced the international economic order, and called for the Alliance to call formally for confession of the Church's contribution to the problem.

There is increased outcry against rampant capitalism. Bill Moyers says: "Jesus drove the money changers from the temple. We must drive them from the temple of democracy." (*Banner*, Sept. 2004). John R. MacArthur, of *Harper's*, said: "The President's (G.W. Bush) message implies 'that he loves the money changers more than he loves his neighbor'" (*Globe and Mail*, Nov. 4, 2004).

It is time to determine whether we must convert the system rather than the individual! We sincerely hope that the Christian Reformed church and others have not irrevocably bought into our present North American economic gospel. We wish for an awakening perception of social injustices, and our churches leading the charge to implement Micah 6:8.

Lippe and Ena de Haan,
Members Exeter CRC, Clinton & Area
Social Action Committee (CASAC)

Crusade myths

While the article about the crusades of October 25 is good at dispelling some old myths, it has a few problems of its own. It seems that Zenith, the Catholic news agency from which the article was taken, glosses over the role of the pope.

The Investiture struggle with the German emperor is a good indication that popes at that time were power-hungry. The pope only called the (first) crusade when there was a possibility that the Eastern Orthodox Church would submit to the pope again. The later crusades are much more complex than the article suggests.

And what about violence? Even though violence and massacres were common, that still would not exonerate Christians. The exoneration meant as an explanation is also a form of modern relativism.

The article states that "From its beginning Christianity has always forbidden coerced conversions of any kind." That may be true in theory, but history indicates something else; for instance, Charlemagne's violent conversions of the Frisians and Saxons was not excused by the contemporary ecclesiastical leadership, and the church was certainly involved in the persecutions and inquisition during the Middle Ages and the Reformation era.

Yours truly,
Bert den Boggende,
Brooks, AB

Although I did not read Madden's book on the Crusades, I'm sure a book written by a Catholic Christian will have a slant of its own. But I do not think that reminding moderns of the "rules" of war prevalent at the time (like the treatment of heretics and witches) is a form of modern relativism. It avoids the dogmatism of imposing contemporary standards on the past.

Editor

Moses and the rock

I noticed the article in the CC of November 8, 2004 titled: "The view from Mt. Nebo" in which you quoted the Lord as saying: "You didn't strike it once as I told you; you got mad and struck it twice!" and then you went on: "Twice instead of once. Talk about punishment disproportionate to the crime!"

Did you take that over from the book written by Amy Marcus? You should have known better, Harry, or anyway you should have checked. I suppose that you have received lots of letters already or else the old emigrants must have been sleeping or have died in the meantime because anyone could have told you what the Scriptures say in Numbers 20:8-11.

Don't go by what I say now. Just check it yourself.

Sincerely Yours,
H.Metzlar, Guelph

Is my face red! Yes, others have drawn my attention to the error. And the error is, indeed, in Marcus's book. When the fact was pointed out to me, I could visualize the page in our Dutch children's Bible with a picture of Moses striking the rock.

Strangely enough, about a week before I sat down to write the editorial, I read through the Bible passages and noted the discrepancy. Yet, when I actually sat down to write, I forgot and followed Marcus's account.

It doesn't undermine the main point of the editorial, though, does it? Whether it is striking instead of speaking or striking once instead of twice, to us it seems a trivial transgression. As with the forbidden tree in the garden, God sets limits before us which sometimes seem trivial to us. Whatever doesn't make sense from our human perspective, we insist on making transparent to our own ways of reasoning. Faith sets limits to that impulse.

Harry

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Opinion

Forked tongues

Harry Antonides

It is a certain fact that not all Muslims are terrorists, but it is equally certain, and exceptionally painful, that almost all terrorists are Muslims....

The majority of those who manned the suicide bombings against buses, vehicles, schools, houses and buildings, all over the world, were Muslim....

What a pathetic record. What an abominable "achievement." Does all this tell us anything about ourselves, our societies and our culture?

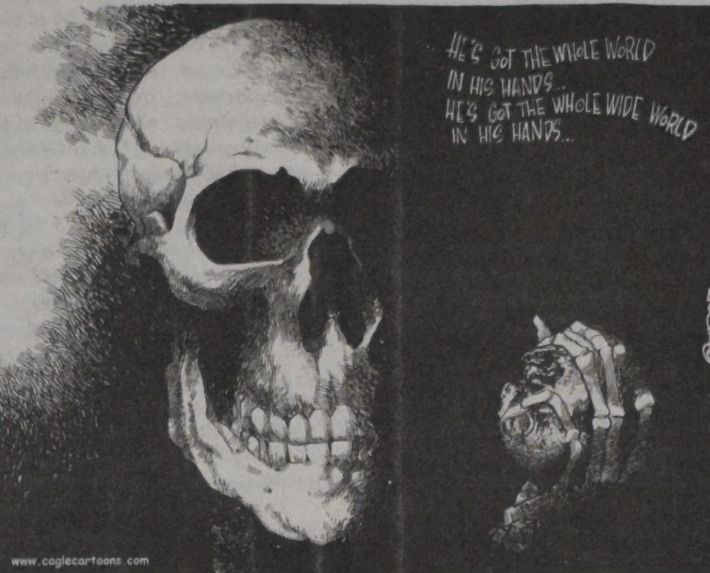
(These excerpts are from an article by Abdel Rahman al-Rashed, a Muslim, who is general manager of the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya news channel. It was published in the September 27, 2004 issue of the pan-Arabic newspaper *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*.)

Shortly after 9/11, then Prime Minister Jean Chretien thought to reassure us by stating that Canada was free of terrorists. He was wrong.

The truth is that terrorists have looked on Canada as a safe haven for many years. The Canadian Security and Intelligence Services has repeatedly warned that much more needs to be done to stop those who use Canada as a base of support for a variety of terrorist organizations.

At a recent conference of the Canadian Association of Security and Intelligence Studies, Mr. Robert Wright, the Prime Minister's national security advisor warned that it is absurd to imagine that we are immune from attacks. He reminded his listeners that Osama bin Laden has included Canada among the countries he urged his followers to attack.

Terrorism is nothing new. But the scope and brutality of its current Islamist practitioners is unprecedented. Canadian policymakers are ill-prepared for the challenge this reality presents to us. There is an obvious disconnect between the findings and ad-



vice of the law enforcement and investigative authorities and the attitude of the Liberal government. (See Stewart Bell, *Cold Terror: How Canada Nurtures and exports*

Terrorism Around the World, to be reviewed in a future column.)

Terrorism by any other name

There are a number of reasons for this disconnect, but all can be traced back to small "I" liberal wishful thinking that is an important component of the prevailing ideology of multiculturalism.

I want to focus on just one aspect of that ideology, namely, the refusal of the main-stream media to call terrorism by its right name. They are abetted in this refusal by a cadre of vocal Muslim leaders. Here are a few examples of recent exchanges in the media.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has the policy not to refer to those who kill and maim innocent civilians, including women and children, as terrorists. Instead it refers to them as freedom fighters, militants, insurgents, or similar bland terms. The Reuters news organization follows a similar policy.

Recently, the *National Post* altered a Reuters news item, which led a number of Muslim leaders to register a complaint. The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations and the Canadian Arab Federation, in a September 17 news release called on the Ontario Press Council to "investigate the troubling practice of biased reporting against Muslims and Arabs in CanWest publications."

The "troubling practice" referred to was to change this sentence in a Reuters story: "...the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades which has been involved in a four-year-

old revolt against Israel occupation in Gaza and West Bank."

This is how it was rewritten and appeared in the *National Post*: "...the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a terrorist group that has been involved in a four-year-old campaign of violence against Israel."

The difference is stark and unmistakable, which led the NCCAR and the CAF to charge that this is evidence of a "perceived anti-Arab agenda" that amounts to a violation of CanWest's "responsibility towards all Canadians, not just Arabs and Muslims."

For good measure, Mr. Omar Alghabra, CAF president, added: "The media has moral and ethical obligations to report the facts when it comes to news reporting, not the opinions of their editors."

Mazen Chouaib, who is the executive director of the NCCAR, made a similar point in his September 22 *Globe and Mail* column. He accused the *National Post*'s editors of "demonizing" Arab Canadians and their culture by referring to Islamist suicide bombers as terrorists.

He described CanWest's influence as "frightening." Then he added: "And through its incitement and propagation of anti-Arab hate, it is sowing discord in Canada. It is time for Parliament to take a hard look at the impact and effect of media concentration in this country."

The brazenness of this claim is mind-boggling. Here are people who call for the heavy hand of the state to curtail the constitutional freedom of speech of other Canadians. At the same time they use their own freedom in this country to whitewash a most hideous crime against innocent men, women and children. And this is how the lofty aspirations of multicultural harmony crash head-on into the ugly reality of naked power politics.

Masters of doublespeak

Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, national president of the Canadian Islamic Congress, has written many articles warning against an alleged anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bias in

Antonides versus Jooisse

Re Mr. James Jooisse's letter, CC, November 22: He and I do not disagree about mere details, but we have totally opposite views about the events in Iraq.

Where I consider the U.S., by and large, an influence for good, Jooisse sees it as a grave danger to the world. Where I see liberation from a monstrous tyranny in Iraq, Jooisse sees "at worst crimes against humanity." He seems to suggest that there is some justification for the murder of peaceful civilian workers in Iraq. I think of that as a horrific crime against fellow human beings. And so on.

I have no clue how to overcome our differences. So rather than cranking up the rhetoric let me take a different tack.

I believe that our opposing views have a lot to do with what we consider to be true and authoritative sources of information. We rely on others to provide the information and insights that shape our convictions about right and wrong. Here world-view, ideology, and the company we keep are decisive. Let me come clean and tell you about the company I keep.

I distrust the editorial and news pages of the *New York Times* and the *Toronto Star*, the *CBC*, and most of the mainline media in North America. The same goes for the views of Michael Moore, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein and like-minded pundits, including less outrageous ones than those mentioned here.

I choose to put far more stock in what I find in William Buckley's *National Review*, *Commentary*, *First Things*, and a number of other, mostly American periodicals and books. Among the authors I find helpful are Bat Ye'or, Charles Colson,

Peter Collier, Jean Bethke Elshaint (author of *Just War Against Terror*), Victor Davis Hanson, David Horowitz, Charles Krauthammer, Bernard Lewis, Bassam Madany, Paul Marshall, Michael Novak, Keith Pavlischek, Daniel Pipes, Norman Podhoretz, Jean-Francois Revel, Mark Steyn, George Weigel.

In Canada the list is much shorter; they include Stewart Bell, Ted Byfield, David Frum, Ian Hunter, Jack Granatstein, Rory Leishman, Elizabeth Nickson, David Warren.

What I find fascinating are the views of Muslim believers who are fundamentally opposed to the likes of Osama bin Laden and radical Wahhabism. Among them are some very knowledgeable commentators, including Amir Taheri, Fouad Ajami, Kanan Makiya, Irshad Manji (author of *The trouble With Islam*).

Nearly all of the persons mentioned here are easily accessible on the Internet. There are many other websites that provide an alternative to the mainstream Western media and to the militant, anti-Western followers of Islam. They are worth investigating.

Further, I am not a pacifist, and I believe that the biblical injunction about peace making and turning the other cheek has to be applied differently in personal relations than in relations among nations. In the latter case, states may be required to wage war in self-defence and in protecting the helpless victims of brutal tyrants.

This is of course way too abrupt and needs to be expanded. These are issues that have created much division and antagonism. Though the prospects do not appear promising, I should hope that a greater measure of rapport among fellow believers is still possible.

Harry Antonides

Stewardship

Canada. He is one of the best-known spokesmen for the Muslim community in keeping with the CIC's purpose "to promote, advance, co-ordinate, facilitate, demonstrate and implement the teachings and practices of Islam."

One of the CIC's posted bulletins "Islam and Canadian Muslims – A very Short Introduction" begins with this statement: "Given the political, social and economic problems glaringly apparently in virtually every other Muslim country, Islam is subjected to negative stereotyping, smear campaigns, hate literature and general bad publicity in the Western press"

You might think this statement is a realistic self-analysis that calls for honest self-examination with a view to overcoming the "glaringly" apparent internal shortcomings. But why then the vehemence in the second part of this sentence?

The first clue is the assumption that all criticism in the West of the admittedly serious problems within the Muslim world is by definition an attack on Islam and all Muslims. As we now know, this has a chilling effect on public debate.

The second clue to this admission of failure is to blame the wretched condition in the Muslim world on outside forces, notably Western colonization and imperialism. Edward Said (1925-2003) was the leading proponent of this theory, which he outlined in his best-selling *Orientalism*. This book powerfully influenced Western scholars in their understanding of the Middle East and the Muslim world.

Mohamed Elmasry's "Subjugation in the Name of 'Reform'" published in the *National Post*, October 4, 2004, is a prime example of this mindset. It is what led Elmasry to say on a recent *Michael Coren Live* Toronto area television talk show that the Intifada (involving suicide bombers) should be seen as the equivalent of the French resistance to the Nazi regime.

He elaborated that not only Israeli military but also civilians are legitimate targets for Palestinian killers. He stated: "They are not innocent if they are part of a population ... (the) total population of Israel is part of the army ... even if they have civilian clothes.... The same if they are women in the army ... anybody above 18 is a part of the Israeli popular army."

In a later interview with the

Globe and Mail Elmasry expanded: "Israel has a people's army and a draft and therefore they should be considered legitimate targets. They are part of the occupying power, and Palestinians consider them targets for suicide bombers as well as other means."

After a public outcry even by some Muslims against his comments, Elmasry tried to backtrack by saying that he merely intended to give voice to the opinions of Palestinians, not his own. Some demanded that Elmasry be fired as president of the CIC, but its board of directors unanimously rejected that demand.

Messrs. Elmasry, Chouaib, Alghabra, and like-minded leaders of the Canadian Muslim community are quick to attack others and demand that even the force of law be used to curtail their freedom of speech. At the same time they refuse to condemn but even try to justify the deadly work of Islamist terrorists.

These men serve as aggressive apologists for their cause while exploiting all the privileges of a democratic and free country. That is their right. But then they turn around and demand that those who disagree with them be stripped of their freedom of speech. We should not allow them by our silence to impose their brand of intolerance on us. Nor should we ignore the fact that even in this country some critics, including Irshad Manji and Stewart Bell, have received death threats.

Voices of courage

Fortunately, the Muslim leaders who preach hatred and violence do not represent all Muslims. The problem is that the non-fanatic believers, with the exception of a few, are largely silent. That's all the more reason to honor those who at the risk of their peace of mind and safety dare to speak the truth about radical Islam – or

Islamism. (See, e.g., Manji's readable and informative book, *The Trouble With Islam: A Wake-up Call for Honesty and Change*.)

Professor Mundir Badr Haloum, a lecturer at a Syrian university, recently wrote in the Lebanese daily *Al-Safir* these stirring words:

Indeed, we as Muslims produce terrorism, succor it, and praise it. We condemn it only when forced to. Motivated by considerations of power, interests, and diplomacy, we wear a pained expression on our faces but in our hearts we rejoice at the brilliant success – a large number of casualties....

Islam is in need of true reform. Islam's need [for reform] – or, to be precise, our need for Islam's reform – is not less than the need for reform in the Arab political regimes.... This is the need for people who are capable of fearlessly acknowledging that terrorism nests within us as Muslims and that we must exorcise it.... Unfortunately, the meaning of delay is more death.... The reform will take a long time and the price will be high, but it is the only path to our return to history as Muslims and not as terrorists....

The courageous critics within Islam, some of whom have paid with their lives, prove that Islam is not as uniformly violent and anti-Western as the fanatics would have us believe. The outcome of the struggle between these two opposing factions will have a profound impact on all of us, for good or ill. While we non-Muslims can only watch from the sidelines, we had better wish the moderates well and treat them as our allies. They will need all the help they can get.

hantonides@sympatico.ca

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick DeGraaf

The Greatest Treasure

Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

[Mark 2: 4,5]

Imagine yourself as one of the four people on the roof looking down on your friend on the mat – squashed in among the people below and in front of Jesus. You want so much for your friend to be able to walk again – that's why you put your hope in this great healer, Jesus.

What's this that you hear. "Son, your sins are forgiven." Wouldn't you have been disappointed if that would have been the end of the story?

Yet, the first gift that Jesus offers is by far the greatest gift. The four people and their friend were hoping that Jesus would restore the paralyzed man's body so that he could 'live' again – be able to walk, carry things, do things, take care of himself and others: life on earthly terms as many of us know it. Instead, Jesus offers him and us something much grander and eternally more significant. Jesus offered him and us LIFE – life as God intended it to be back in the Garden of Eden. Recall, that there was a second tree, a tree of Life in the garden that Adam and Eve were banished from eating after they ate of the tree that they were warned not to eat from (Genesis 3: 22,23). That second tree, the fruit of which, had the ability to give us eternal life.

Jesus has become that tree of LIFE.

Knowing that our sins are forgiven is the key to having life today and having it eternally. It is the first priority and the most important treasure. As we celebrate Christmas, we see God the Father giving us his only Son, so that we might have life today.

The four people and their friend were not disappointed – even if they didn't understand fully what Jesus came to do. Still it is discouraging to suffer or for us to see others suffer in this life. It disappoints us when God chooses not to heal us physically. But yet, we need to revel in God's grace by his gift of the greatest treasure: the sentence of death is paid for and now we may eat of the 'tree of life.'

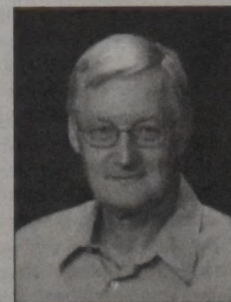
What's this got to do with Stewardship? Everything! As disciples of Jesus, we have been entrusted with the stewardship of the world's greatest treasure. Jesus personally trained the first disciples to go out and proclaim the good news – this treasure. We are the modern day equivalents. Let's manage all our resources wisely: people and material to get the word out – so that many more may come to know Jesus saying to them: "Son [daughter], your sins are forgiven."

Stewardly Tip: Fun in Re-using (parents/school-aged children) Take a used light bulb, some colorful acrylic paints, an ornament hook, and some hot melt glue, add some time and fun and you'll get memories, special decorations and lots of individual creativity. Result: what was once valueless has become a keepsake. (Contribution from a CC reader)

Readers: We want to share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can do our part to make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Please write or email or visit the CC website. Please leave your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or, if we need to, we can ask you for more details.

Next issue: A Child Called 'Charity'

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@cssservices.ca



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Church

Church Attacked in Mangalore, India

Vishal Arora

DELHI (Compass) — A group of about 15 people attacked a church in the coastal town of Mangalore during Sunday worship on November 7, according to the Press Trust of India. The crowd barged into a hall belonging to the Jesus Bread of Life Ministry.

The mob threw stones and smashed windowpanes, chairs, fans, pots and musical instruments. No casualties were reported in the attack.

After destroying church property, the mob warned the worshippers against conducting religious conversion.

Police arrested one man for questioning on the day of the attack and arrested 11 more suspects ten days later. The church has since registered a case accusing the mob of rioting and causing disturbance to religious harmony.

Priscilla D'Souza, president of the Jesus Bread of Life Ministry, denied the charges of conversion. "We are not involved in conversions. If we talk to people about humanity, people accuse us of attempting conversions. These [accusers] are the people behind the attack."

D'Souza has lodged a complaint with the Urva Police Station, alleging the involvement of the Bajrang Dal, a Hindu extremist group.

The local superintendent of police, said police were patrolling the area every day. He promised the church authorities that he would find and punish the culprits. The superintendent rejected claims that an organized group was involved in the attack and said that residents had long complained of "disturbance" in the neighborhood due to the church services.

Local media said an attack was imminent, but police failed to provide protection on the day of the attack. "A local newspaper published a derogatory report against Christians on November 2 and said that our prayer hall would be attacked," D'Souza told Compass.

"We have been facing opposition ever since we started constructing the prayer hall in September 2003. Some communal elements raised objections, alleging we were making a prostitution center. They also stole our building material and fans in order to hinder the construction work.

More recently, local Hindus implicated D'Souza in a criminal

case. "They alleged that my friend and I were conspiring to murder someone," she said. The case is still under investigation by district officials.

Two weeks prior to the latest attack, a delegation of lay Christians, priests and nuns approached the deputy commissioner of police to appeal for protection for places of worship. They asked him to speed up the investigation of crimes against minority communities, including attacks on temples, churches and mosques. They also asserted that newspapers in the local area had launched a hate campaign against Christians and Christian institutions.

Pastor V.M. Samuel of the Bangalore New Life Fellowship (NLF)



Street vendors in Mangalore, India

told Compass that numerous attacks on churches in and around Mangalore have occurred in recent years. One of the most recent attacks took place on September 12.

"On that day, a group of 15 people forcibly entered a church belonging to the NLF and violently attacked the pastor and the congregation," Samuel said. "Three people,

including the pastor and a young boy, were hospitalized. The assailants also vandalized church furniture and electronic equipment. The loss was estimated at 200,000 rupees (\$4,500).

"Last year on September 21, a mob of 20 activists from the Bajrang Dal attacked and disrupted a Sunday gathering of the Christian youth of the NLF on Museum Road, Bijai, Mangalore. They physically assaulted the young people — including girls — and damaged the church furniture and sound system. The damage was estimated at over 100,000 rupees (\$2,250).

"Again on April 14, 2002, about 60 people attacked a NLF church in Moodbidri, alleging the church was converting Hindus to Christianity."

Hindu nationalists revive hate campaign

Joshua Newton

KOCHI, India (Compass) — The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), desperately seeking its way back to federal power in India, is reverting to its anti-minority political platform known as Hindutva or Hindu nationalism. If implemented, Christians and Muslims could face a backlash of Hindu extremism.

At a three-day national executive meeting late November in Haridwar, the BJP re-elected L. K. Advani to party leadership. Advani was once subpoenaed by a court for his involvement in the demolition of a mosque.

In a hard-hitting speech, Advani declared his party's commitment to constructing a "Hindu India" and called the party "a chosen instrument of the divine."

Concern about the beating it took in this year's state assembly elections in Maharashtra and elsewhere was evident throughout the BJP meeting. Observers say the BJP plans to encourage more anti-Christian and anti-Muslim feelings across the nation of one billion people, in order to bolster its electoral standing in polls and maintain a footing in federal administration.

"Let every adversary of ours be warned," said Advani. "If anybody

tries to take the cover of secularism to indulge in anti-Hindu politics and statecraft, the BJP will stand in their path like a rock, prepared to make any sacrifice."

At a recent national executive meeting in northern India, the BJP chief assured leaders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological movement that spawned the BJP, that the party will return to its core Hindutva values to shape policy decisions.

By committing to the political agenda of a "Hindu India," the BJP will likely launch aggressive campaigns against Christian and Muslim communities, which the BJP think are supporting their political rivals. Christian and other minority leaders fear a new backlash along the lines of the ideological mass mobilization that preceded the destruction of Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya in 1992.

Advani has called the conversion of tribal Hindus to Christianity and Buddhism "fraudulent." "Why is raising one's voice against such fraudulent conversions of poor tribals and other indigenous people considered a communal act in this country?" he asked.

"The time has come to proclaim, and proclaim with all the courage of our conviction, that

India is secular principally because of its Hindu ethos. Remove this Hindu ethos, and there will be no India left."

India's constitution declares that India is a secular state, clearly providing the freedom to propagate any religion or social cause.

Senior party functionaries believe the BJP's electoral base is eroding due to the alienation of party workers and the mismanagement of BJP-ruled states. Hence, the BJP and its affiliated organizations have given the "green light" for its cadres to work against Christian groups which they fear are converting Hindus.

As part of a "homecoming" program, over 300 tribal Christians were "reconverted" to Hinduism in October in a mass ceremony organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, or World Hindu Council) in the northeastern state of Orissa.

"It was the largest purification program carried out by us," said Gauri Prasad Rath, state secretary of the VHP. "Three hundred and thirty-six people from 80 families who had been lured to become Christians were brought back to Hinduism."

Indian Christian leaders expressed shock and dismay over the

incident. "This is nothing but a vicious and hostile hate campaign launched by the VHP," said John Dayal, general secretary of the All India Christian Council, the largest Christian body in India. "We have told the state government several times about this hate campaign."

According to Christian leaders, the militant VHP plans to triple its presence within two years in India's highly sensitive tribal belt which spans Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. The BJP governs these states and also forms part of a coalition government in the state of Orissa.

Hindu orators have unleashed a series of sermons against Christian thought and Christian mission work in rural areas. Illiterate villagers are misled by lies and half-truths spread through indigenous-language tracts. Christian leaders now fear that this renewed hate campaign — with the blessing of Advani's BJP — could lead to more conflict.

Advani and leaders like him are also unnerved because the new Congress Party-led federal government is rewriting history texts for schools. A panel of historians discovered that the books were altered during BJP rule to include misinformation on other faiths.

Church

Ivory Coast : Christians anxious as war threatens

Elizabeth Kendal

AUSTRALIA (ANS) — When mostly Muslim rebels (backed with foreign funds and arms) seized control of northern Ivory Coast (IC) in 2002, Christians, southerners and government supporters fled south for their lives. As those fleeing included most of northern IC's doctors, nurses, professionals, administrators and school teachers, living conditions in the north have deteriorated markedly under rebel control. Of great concern are reports from MSF (Doctors without Borders) and the UN that AIDS has increased markedly in the north as desperate girls prostitute themselves to survive. Having abandoned the government of national unity, the rebels declared in mid-October their refusal to negotiate further or disarm.

On November 4, President Laurent Gbagbo launched a surprise air raid on rebel strongholds in the north, attempting to defeat them militarily and re-unify the country. When nine French peacekeepers in rebel territory were killed in an air raid November 6, France immediately responded by destroying the two IC helicopter gunships used in the raid. France then struck preemptively to 'neutralise' IC air power, de-



stroying all IC's air force planes and the airport tarmac. When French tanks then headed for the Presidential Palace, government supporters streamed into the streets and created a human shield around it. Some government supporters furiously attacked French interests. While no non-African died in the protests, French soldiers killed up to 100 and wounded some 1,000 protesting government supporters.

Though France, the former colonial power in IC, is acting as peacekeeper and peace mediator, it is not neutral. Intelligence agencies have long believed that France would like to see or even engineer a coup in IC. President Gbagbo is opposed to the pro-France policies of IC, believing they are not

in IC's best interests. Gbagbo's rival, A.D. Ouattara, the president of the RDR party with which the rebels are aligned, implemented many pro-France initiatives when he was Prime Minister. France would benefit economically if Ouattara were back in power. What we have today is a still uncertain future, with a three-way stand off between the IC, France and the rebels.

IC has a huge population of immigrants from Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso, its poorer northern Islamic neighbors.

The possibility of the rebels' aims succeeding causes IC's Christians great anxiety as all these migrants would be naturalized, making IC instantly a Muslim majority nation. Then, by the strength of their votes, the constitution could be amended and A.D. Ouattara elected president. (Presently he is barred from the presidency due to issues of nationality.) If that happens, IC will never be the same again, but will become a reflection of its northern Islamic neighbors. This scenario does not sit well with Ivorians — Muslim, Christian and traditional religionists — who regard their liberty as precious.

Elizabeth Kendal is the Principal Researcher and Writer for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission (WEA RLC)

European leaders fail to include Christian roots in EU Constitution

ROME (BP)—When 25 European Union leaders signed the first EU Constitution, any reference to the continent's Christian roots was omitted despite requests from the Vatican.

The constitution, which consolidates past European Union treaties into a single document, was signed Oct. 29 in Rome but is largely viewed as ceremonial because national parliaments from member countries still must ratify it.

"What religious sense that remains [in Europe] is little more than a residue of history," Darrell Bock, a New Testament studies professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, observed in a *Dallas Morning News* column.

"Europe is post-Christian, almost completely secular," wrote Bock, who is currently a guest scholar in Germany. "Fewer than 5 percent of Europeans go to church or synagogue, a great contrast to the 40 percent to 50 percent in the United States."

Bock added that more Muslims in England attend weekly worship services than do Anglicans.

"The Holy See has always favored the promotion of a united Europe on the basis of those values that are part of its history," Pope John Paul II said after the signing of the constitution, according to *The New York Times*. "Keeping into account the continent's Christian roots means making use of a spiri-

tual heritage that remains fundamental for the union's future developments."

Examples abound, however, of Europe's growing secularism. The Roman Catholic Italian minister who was nominated as the union's justice minister withdrew his candidacy after drawing criticism for his conservative views. During his confirmation hearings before the European Parliament, Rocco Buttiglione called homosexuality a sin and said women are better off married and at home. The candidate who has replaced Buttiglione favors homosexual unions.

"The rights of homosexuals should be defended on the same basis as the rights of all European citizens," Buttiglione had said in part. "I would not accept the idea that homosexuals are a category apart."

"The European Parliament probably would have rejected Bush, but the American people have instead voted for him," Buttiglione commented after stepping aside, according to *The Times*. "America has shown itself more religious and more attentive to values than Europe."

"Is anyone surprised that a conservative Roman Catholic would believe that homosexuality is a sin and that men and women should marry in order to have children?" asked R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in his Crosswalk.com column.

The Buttiglione controversy "provides convincing proof" that the European Union, which has "refused even to acknowledge that Christianity had formative influence in the creation of European culture, has lost all moral sanity and is firmly committed to creating a new post-Christian, post-tolerant and postmodern culture of radical moral revolution."

At least one Italian political commentator believes the criticism of Buttiglione and the fight to include Christian roots in the constitution may turn out to be a good thing for those who wish to diminish the advance of secularism in Europe.

"It's positive," Luca Diotallevi, a sociologist at the University of Rome, told *The Times*. "We will begin to discuss things that have long been taken for granted. Religion was an issue we could not touch. Now we're starting. We're not very good at it, but we're just getting started."

The EU is dealing with religion in another area over the question of admitting Turkey into membership. Though the EU has in the past cited concerns about Turkey's human rights and democracy practices, some say the underlying concern is Islam.

A report in the November issue of *Egypt Today* recounted that 20 to 30 percent of the French population under the age of 25 are now Muslim. Demographers also con-

Churches in Germany are losing ground

Wolfgang Polzer

HANOVER/BONN (ANS) — Churches in Germany are losing ground. According to the latest statistics published by the headquarters of the mainline Protestant Churches in Hanover and the Roman Catholic Church in Bonn membership dropped by more than one percent in the year 2003.

The losses are mainly due to the aging population: The number of deaths exceeds the number of infant baptisms. But there are also significant numbers of dissatisfied or nominal church members who cancel their membership mainly to avoid church tax.

In 2003 the Protestant churches suffered membership losses of 1.6 percent. The figures dropped by 375,000 to 25.8 million. The Catholic Church shrunk by 1.1 percent to 26.2 million.

In addition to these major churches, the Orthodox Churches have 1.1 million citizens on their registers. About 900,000 Germans belong to evangelical and charismatic churches, the so-called free churches (Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals etc.).

In all, about one third of the German population of 82.5 million is Protestant and one third Catholic. The rest belong to other religions or are unaffiliated. There are more than three million Muslims in Germany, mostly Turkish immigrants.

Church affiliation has dwindled significantly since re-unification. In 1990, 71 percent of the 80.3 million citizens were church members — 29.2 million Protestants and 28.2 million Catholics. During the past 14 years Catholics have surpassed Protestants in Martin Luther's country.

Wolfgang Polzer (54), is senior news editor of the Evangelical News Agency idea.

tend that native-born French are not reproducing at nearly the rate of France's large Muslim immigrant community. France has more Muslim immigrants than any state in the EU, currently representing about 7 percent of the nation's 60 million people.

Thus, the French fear that allowing Turkey into the EU would cause "the river of Islam to enter the riverbed of secularism" at an even faster rate than the present time, according to *Egypt Today* writer Tom Goeller. Polls in France show a majority of the population opposing Turkey's entry into the EU.

But Turkey should be allowed into the EU, Goeller contended, because it is the only Muslim country in the world that is governed by what can be called a democracy.

"Therefore, Turkey is the proof that Islam and democracy are compatible, a fact that is vehemently denied by radical Islamists," Goeller wrote. "There can be no doubt: It is in the EU's vital strategic interests that Turkey stays democratic, stable, prosperous and a friendly ally. To again exclude the 'Muslim part of Europe' from the Union would be extremely shortsighted in the fight against global terrorism."

Story

Grandpa's gift

Kailey De Boer

Every Christmas Eve my family and I go over to my Grandmother's house and we celebrate the holiday there. Because my Grandpa died many years ago in an accident, we go over there to make sure Grandma isn't lonely. At least that's what mom says.

My sister, Isabel, and I have to share a room at Grandma's place. And even though it is the smallest room in the house, we try to make the best out of it. Unfortunately, last Christmas we obviously didn't try hard enough to make the best of our room. Isabel and I had an all-out yell-our-heads-off-throw-stuffed-animals-at-each-other brawl while we tried to unpack our suitcases into the old wardrobe on the sidewall. Isabel wanted to divide the room in half so we had to stay on our own sides.

Unfortunately, her side had the door to get out, so unless I was going to spend Christmas eve sitting on my bed, I had to send her a loud message that I didn't like her idea. The fight ended with me pulling Isabel's ponytails and yelling, "We're supposed to share everything and get along on Christmas, you know!" I ran out of our room to the hallway and to the doorway at the end of the hall Grandma always tells us never to open.

To get away from Isabel, I went through the door. Isabel would never disobey one of Grandma's rules.

I could see why Grandma didn't want us in there. Once inside the door, you were faced with a long staircase going up to another doorway leading to the attic. The stairway was dark, dusty and full of cobwebs that looked like fishing nets that could scoop you up at any moment.

I remember clearly as I ran up the dark, wood, squeaky staircase, hearing my grandma say, "Is she gonna be alright?" And then my mother replying, "Oh, she'll be fine. Those two fight like that probably twelve times a day."

I stopped suddenly as tear drops ran down my cheeks, but then I stuck my tongue out at the wall, pretending it was my mom. And then I thought not everything is always okay, especially in this matter. But then I soon darted up those stairs again.

When I got up to the top, I tried to push open the door by putting all my weight into my arms. I admit I really didn't know how to open the door, because I had never been up there in my life. It was probably a place grandma hadn't been up to either in a long time.

At last I got the door open. It made a very startling sound and made me almost tumble backwards down the stairs; luckily I had a good grip. Slowly I crept into the dark, cobwebbed room. I started to feel the walls, looking for a light switch and I was very careful not to stumble over anything. I finally managed to find the switch on one of the corners near one of the windows. When I reached over to flick on the switch, a dim light flickered and then turned on a little brighter.

When I looked down at the floor, I saw probably about twenty cardboard boxes piled up on top of each other. I didn't want to be rude and start looking through all of Grandma's personal stuff in her house that she hadn't touched in a long time, but I just couldn't resist.



Slowly tip-toeing over to one of the boxes, I quietly opened it up. Inside was a photo album.

I picked up the big old leather book and slowly opened the cover. In the book were four small black and white pictures. They were all pictures of a little girl and a man. It was Christmas. The little girl was sitting on the man's shoulders putting an angel on a Christmas tree. Each year they had a picture of her doing that on the man's shoulders, but then there was one big blank spot that you almost couldn't miss. There was just the little girl on someone else's shoulders — my grandma's shoulders. I figured that the man and the little girl were my mom and grandpa.

After gazing at the pictures for several seconds, I cautiously shut the book and started to bring it down to set into the box. But right before I did, I saw a small blue wrapped box with a red ribbon. As I stared at it, thinking, It is probably a Christmas present for me, maybe if I slowly and very carefully open the box I can just wrap it back up again. Selfishly I untied the ribbon and opened the small box thinking that I could wrap it back up again. As I slowly opened the box I saw that inside was another small box and a rolled-up piece of paper. I carefully unrolled the piece of paper, realizing that it was a letter.

It read:

Dear Anna,

Merry Christmas! I am so sorry I couldn't be there with you to celebrate the Holiday. But I have to tell you something in printing instead of in words. I need to go save our country by going into war. But dear, don't worry because I will try to return. Though here is a gift for you. You shall use it as a remembrance gift of me while I am gone.

Now remember the Lord is always with you. I must go now but I will keep in touch with you.

All my love and the Lord's,
Your father

My mom's name is Anna, I thought. And that letter is to her and from my grandpa. I didn't open the tiny, soft felt box because maybe my mother had never received this gift, and if I opened it now I would be the first person to see it. And the gift was meant for her and it was from her Daddy. But now I knew what I was going to give my mom for Christmas. I quietly rolled the letter back up and set it in the box. I found some tape in an old desk in the attic and wrapped the small box up again.

Pretty soon the box looked great again. Then I walked over to the box with the photo album. I picked up the small gift and book. I wrote on the box: FROM ANNIE AND GRANDPA. Then I got up and was making my way to the door just as my dad called, "Annie! Dinner!" I creaked open the door and stepped down the steep staircase.

I had a wonderful Christmas dinner and after that we did the Christmas presents. But right before our Christmas presents I gave Isabel a little squeeze and I said that I was sorry. I think there shouldn't be any fighting on Christmas.

As I ran to my bedroom to get the gift, I thought about erasing the "From grandpa" part. But then I thought, No, I will erase the "from Annie" part because I just found the gift. It was from Grandpa — my mom's dad.

When I gave the gift to my mom, she started to cry.

Then I whispered in her ear, "Is the Lord with everyone all the time?" My mom nodded. She said that even when it is the worst times ever he is still with you.

That night when I went to bed I prayed and I whispered, "God, thank you for being with grandpa in the war and thank you for being with my mom through all those tough times of her dad not being there and God, thank you for letting me go to the attic and find that gift this Christmas."

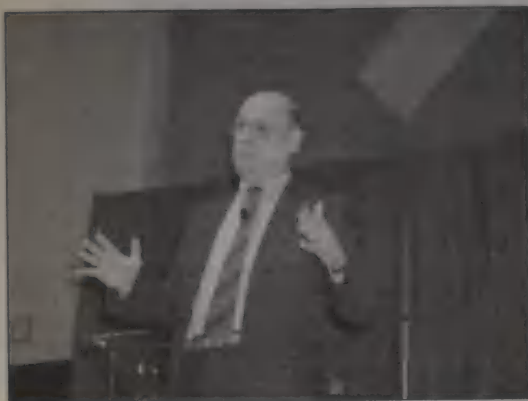
I started to fall asleep. "Amen."



Kailey DeBoer is the 10 year-old daughter of Ron DeBoer and like her father she loves to write and write. She won first prize in a huge short story competition this past summer. She and her father are crafting a story via email. They e-mail one another, each adding a line to a story. Looks like we're growing a new writer.

Reflections

The newest kind of church



Tony Campolo

As we enter the twenty-first century, a vital new expression of Christianity is growing in the United States and worldwide. This movement even has a name. It is called "the Emergent Church."

This movement expresses what I call "progressive evangelicalism," because it emphasizes traditional evangelical beliefs – affirming the doctrines of the Apostle's Creed, a high view of Scripture, and the importance of a personal transforming relationship with a resurrected Christ – yet rejects the structures and styles of institutionalized Christianity.

The Emergent Church turns away from spending money on buildings. Instead, most congregations meet as "house churches" or gather in makeshift storefronts and warehouses. The members, mostly Gen-Xers, try to imitate many of the practices of the early church.

Emergent churches espouse a decentralized grassroots form of Christianity that rejects the hierarchal systems of denominational churches. Each emergent congregation makes its own decisions by consensus. Leadership is fluid, with all members sharing authority and participating in the mission of the church. Task forces are assembled to undertake specific programs such as feeding the homeless, establishing a partnership with a third-world church, developing an after-school tutoring program for disadvantaged children, or organizing people in a poor neighborhood to solve pressing social problems.

The missionary programs of such congregations are committed to direct involvement with those they decide to serve. These churches want little to do with bureaucratic organizations with professional administrators. Members of these congregations want to be involved personally with those in need. They want to know the names and faces of the people they serve.

Emergent congregations must not be confused with those nondenominational mega-churches that seem to be popping up increasingly in communities across the nation. In fact, the two are markedly different. Emergent churches often express a disdain for the "contemporary worship music" heard in many mega-churches. The worship in emergent churches often includes classical music, and such congregations often follow a more formal liturgical style that may even incorporate ancient forms of praying such as that of monastic orders. The people who join emergent congregations are often folks who have tired of what goes on in churches that have "contemporary services."

The Emergent Church is often somewhat indifferent to theological and social issues that seem urgent to mainstream evangelicalism. These church members tend to think the crusade against homosexual marriage is a waste of time and energy, and they tend to reject the exclusivistic claims

Why all the fuss?

My friend and I were discussing how difficult it is not to get pulled into the rampant consumerism surrounding Christmas, especially in our North American culture. Her self-indictment surprised me, since she's one of the most beautifully non-materialistic people I know. It also caused me to stop and take stock of some of the habits I've personally become accustomed to at this time of the year and why I persist in them.

Take the Christmas tree for example. I'm sitting here breathing in the scent of fresh evergreen, admiring the tiny lights on the Fraser Fir in our living room. It's a strange tradition – dragging a real tree into the house and decorating it with assorted shimmering baubles. I know it's the Christianized version of a Pagan ritual, and I admit that it's become an integral part of my holiday celebration.

The Christmas tree is a source of many fond memories for me. As a child I recall the thrill of seeing a tree sticking out of the trunk of my dad's car, and the agony of watching it stand in a pail of water in the garage for a few days before he put it up. When I had kids of my own the tree took on a new dimension of excitement. I remember the year James and Stephanie were two and a half years old. We spent an afternoon decorating the tree. They watched in awe, their faces reflecting the glow of the colored lights.

That evening Jack and I both happened to leave the room for a minute at the same time. We heard a loud crash, followed by frantic cries for help. Returning to the dining room we found our tree on its side and two sets of little legs thrashing about, their owners unable to extricate themselves from the fallen pine. When we finally pulled them out the twins had a new respect for the Christmas tree.

One year I snuggled up with the kids on the sofa and read them the Christmas story by the light of the tree. When I finished James asked in a serious voice, "Mommy, do angels smoke?"

"Of course not, James," I answered.

"Well that one does!" he said, pointing to our treetop.

And yes indeed, she was smoking. I quickly unplugged the lights and disconnected our angelic fire hazard.

One of my favorite tree decorations is a bundle of crayons tied together with a bright red ribbon. They belong to Jessica, my youngest. I remember sitting in the dentist's waiting room while she had her first and only filling at the age of three. I sat there lamenting her

cavity, hoping that she wouldn't be traumatized by the procedure. After only a few minutes the door opened and Jess emerged with a huge smile on her face, hand in hand with the dental assistant. She proudly strolled over to the Christmas tree and chose her "prize" for being so brave. I was so relieved I could have cried.

Every year I decorate. I write cards to people I rarely see. I plan big meals, bake goodies and buy gifts. None of this has anything to do with the real reason for Christmas.

Or does it? It seems to me that if we don't celebrate at Christmas, when will we celebrate? It is an appropriate time of year to take stock of our blessings, to reconnect to our family and friends, and to consider what life is all about. We remember the birth of Christ and we await his return. In the meantime, we have a lot of living to do. It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of life and forget that we are just passing through. What better way to consciously mark time than by the yearly observance of the Savior's birth?

That same baby who began life on earth wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the rough wood of a feed box ended his life stripped bare and bleeding, nailed to the rugged wood of a Roman cross. I sometimes wonder if those same angels who joyfully heralded his birth on the Judean hillsides also wept bitterly as they watched him die on Calvary some thirty years later. And yet it's all part of God's plan – the beauty of Jesus' life, the unthinkable misery of his death and the victory of his resurrection work together and give us cause to carry on.

Not every Christmas is happy. I know people who will grieve the loss of a loved one this year for the first time, others who face debilitating illness, still others who are worried about having a job next year. These issues overshadow all the glitz and glamor of Christmas. But they can never rob the believer of the true joy to be had from knowing that Christ has come once into this world and he will return to take us home. That's something worth making a fuss about.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in
Harriston, Ontario. Her
email:
hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com



that many evangelicals make about salvation. They are not about to damn the likes of Gandhi or the Dali Lama to hell simply because they have not embraced Christianity. In many ways these Christians express a postmodern mindset that may come across as being somewhat "new age." They see care for the environment as a major Christian responsibility. They are attracted to Christian mysticism and its Catholic exponents from Teresa of Avila to Thomas Merton. They talk a great deal about "spiritual formation" and focus significant attention on the healing of illnesses through prayer.

This new expression of Christianity is growing faster than most sociologists could have predicted. It is thriving, in part, because so many people are fed up with the arguing and pettiness that they claim are all too evident in the

rest of Christendom.

It remains to be seen whether the Emergent Church will fade away or become an ongoing expression of Christianity. But there is no question that it is attracting many sophisticated Christians who contend that traditional mainline churches are devoid of vitality and mega-churches are irrelevantly narrow.

As a member of a traditional mainline denomination myself, I am watching with great interest the development of the Emergent Church. Some call it heresy; others see it as a new form of Christianity that holds promise for the twenty-first century and beyond. Whether it's the former or the latter, only time will tell.

Story

Looking for God in a strange land: Advent themes

(Continued from Dec. 6 issue)

Ko [The old man and the angel]

When he gets home—too late as always, Mother says—he shows her that the sole of his boot is coming loose.

"Is Father home yet? Maybe he can nail it back together," he suggests hopefully. Father found the boots in an apartment after the people moved out, but Ko loves them. They look like the boots worn by fighter pilots and they are lined with genuine sheepskin.

Mother examines them, sticking the tip of her finger in the gap that has opened on the side.

"Stop it, Maw! You're tickling me."

"Don't call me Maw. You sound like a bleating sheep."

"Would you like me to call you Moo instead? Moo, moo!" Some Dutch kids that he knows call their mothers Moo. "Moo, moo. My mother is a cow."

Mother boxes his ear lightly. "Careful: I'll wash your mouth out with soap."

"That wouldn't be fair. Moo isn't a swear-word."

"I'll wash out your mouth for not respecting your elders. Or would you rather I use the *matteklopper*?"

You can't win with parents. They can always fall back on brute force.

"Here's two dollars," says Mother, reaching up into the gravy boat where she keeps the money. "Go to the shoemaker, and he'll sew your sole back on. The stitching has just let loose. Probably because you walked through mud with them."

"I only wear them in the winter when the ground is frozen," he protests.

"Here, get going!" She thrusts the pink bill into his hands.

"Do I walk back on my socks?"

"No, mister smarty-pants, you ask him to fix them while you wait. How come you're always so mouthy after you play with Duggan? That Canadian boy is not a good influence. Why don't you play with Benny?"

As he's leaving, he sticks his head back through the door and shouts, "Because Benny is a bugger!"

And then he races around the corner of the house, not slowing down till he's past the tall Caragana hedge and headed down the road that runs behind the house. In winter after it has snowed, it's not a road any longer because the snowplow doesn't keep it open. It's just a winding trail that leads to the coal mine. Kids go sledding down the hills of coal. But only when it's very cold and when there's lots of snow; otherwise the snow melts off the black hills.

Ko is headed for the shoemaker who lives in the barracks behind the abandoned coal mine. He knows that when Mother told him to go to the shoemaker, she meant the one between the hardware

store and the barber, but she hadn't really said so. Almost no one goes to the shoemaker behind the coal mine because they say he's crazy. Even Duggan is afraid of him because he dresses funny and has long shaggy hair and a white beard. Mother calls him "that crazy old man" too, but Ko likes him.

One day in the spring when Ko was all by himself, he sat down on the wooden bench in front of the dark gray barracks. The old man had built it with tree branches and Ko had long wanted to try it out. It was set between two huge lilac bushes that were in full bloom, filling the air with their fragrance. Towering over the bench was a huge four-headed figure carved from an old maple that had once gown there. The trunk had scales like a dragon and a spine like a dinosaur and a tail that curled around the base like a huge serpent. The heads carved on the ends of the four branches were not dragon heads, however: they were human heads. One even had the face of a woman.

Ko had taken off his shoe because a tiny stone had penetrated through a hole in the side, a hole located just about the same place as the one in his boot. Suddenly a shadow fell over him, and when he looked up, there was the crazy old man.

He'd thought the man was far down the road on his ancient steel-wheeled tractor fixing the ruts in the road as if he worked for the town. The sudden appearance of the old man surprised him, but he was even more surprised by the fact that he wasn't afraid.

The old man put the tractor part he was holding in his hands on the bench and took the shoe from Ko's hand. After examining it, he shook his head, mumbled something, and suddenly tore the entire sole off his shoe. Ko stared wide-eyed, stunned by the sudden destruction of his shoe.

He looked up into the face of the old man, almost as brown as his shoe but much more wrinkled, and the old man squinted back at him.

"Come," said the old man, turning and walking toward the long narrow building behind the lilac bushes. A wooden sidewalk led to the door.

Ko limped along behind him. "Who's that woman?" he asked.

"Who?" the old man turned.

"That woman on the dragon," he said, pointing up at the wooden sculpture.

"Oh that—that's the Queen. And that's the Prime Minister," he added, pointing to the nearest male head, which wore a stovepipe hat.

As Ko shaded his eyes to look up at the Prime Minister, the screen door banged behind him. The old man had disappeared into the dark interior with his shoe.

Slowly, his heart beating faster, Ko followed the old man inside. After being

outside in the bright sun, looking into the gloomy interior was like looking into a dark cave. As his eyes adjusted to the gloom, out of the darkness emerged rows of strange machines of all kinds. The narrow room seemed to go on forever and the old man had vanished from sight deep into the bowels of this gallery of machines.

Then he heard a click and a hum. "Over here!" a voice called impatiently. "Don't just stand there gawking." His hairy head popped up from behind a machine. He was now wearing spectacles.

When Ko reached him, he was just screwing the lid off a can. Stuck to the inside of the lid was a small brush coated with an amber liquid that the old man expertly applied to the shoe's upper. Then he brought the two parts back together and pushed it under the foot of the machine—a big sewing machine with much of the insides showing.

"Watch closely. Maybe you can learn to do this yourself," said the old man lowering the foot of the sewing machine into place.

That struck Ko as unlikely. His mother certainly didn't have a huge sewing machine like this. Looking around, he saw a long row of machines just like this one and beyond them others that were much taller and still others that were as long as two or three kitchen tables with rows of wheels—no, brushes of various colors and widths.

"When you start, you have to watch out for your thumb," explained the old man. "I've seen the needle catch somebody's thumbnail. It went in just a little ways. But you can't back up with these machines. I had to quickly push the needle through and then pull out the thread. Otherwise the poor fellow would have been wearing a shoe on his thumb." He chuckled to himself. "You don't want that—a shoe on your thumb. Nosiree."

After fixing Ko's shoe and adding extra stitching to the other one as well, the old man showed Ko through his gallery of machines—for cutting leather, for shaping shoes according to different shapes and sizes, for buffing and shining shoes and even some for purposes completely unrelated to shoes—drills, a tall bandsaw—even a machine that turned coal into diamonds, said the old man.

What fascinated Ko most of all, however, was a wall lined with shelves on which stood figures of various sizes carved from wood. The old man let him hold a number of them as Ko marveled at the workmanship. Some were animals he readily recognized like wolves and bears and antelope, but others were fantastic creatures that were almost repulsive in their strangeness.

"That's a griffin," said the old man, as Ko picked up a lion with the head and

wings of an eagle. There were puzzles carved from wood, one had a ball that tumbled about inside it. "That's carved from a single piece of wood," said the old man proudly, as Ko turned it over to watch the wooden ball tumble about inside. He didn't see how anyone could have carved the ball while it was inside the elaborate tube.

One tall human figure had a huge elongated head with hair sprouting from the sides like flames, and a mouth much too large with wicked-looking teeth. Its feet were monstrous and its belly sagged like that of a pregnant sow. There was a giraffe with a neck that spiraled up into the darkness near the ceiling, where it sprouted three heads.

But most of the figures were small, not much larger than the small cowboy figures he has at home, but these were carved from woods of different shades of brown and polished so smooth that they caught the light like brass candelabra. The old man seemed to have captured a flame inside the wood.

It is these small figures that Ko recalled when Mother sent him to get his shoes repaired. Among the figures was a manger scene with Mary and Joseph and the wisemen and a donkey and camels and shepherds and sheep and even a sheepdog. In his pocket Ko has some of his own money. He has decided to buy something for Mother for Christmas, something carved from wood—maybe the manger scene. But he has no idea how much it would cost. All he has is six dollars saved from the paper route that he took over for four weeks this past summer.

The old man scratches his head when Ko asks him if he can buy the manger scene. He hems and haws. "Well, nobody ever asked me before. I don't make them to sell, you see. I make them... well, I don't know why I make them. But if I sold that manger scene, I don't know how I'd celebrate Christmas. You see, I put it in the middle of my table over here during Christmas week and then every day I sit by the table and one of the figures tells me a story. If they were gone, who would tell me the stories?"

Ko nods vigorously to show he understands. "That's okay. I just wanted to buy something you made so I could give my mother something special."

The old man's eyes light up. He gestures for Ko to follow as he scurries past his rows of machines toward the rear of the long building to his carving bench. Reaching up, he turns on a lamp that bends over the workbench like a bird to watch him work. In the middle of the low bench stands a tall figure carved from pale wood. The first thing Ko notices are the hands with its long delicate fingers raised as the *dominee* does in

Story

church at the end of the service. It is dressed like a Roman soldier, a centurion. Ko recognizes the uniform from the big picture in the children's Bible. Like the centurion at the foot of the cross, the carved figure has a sword and chest armor. On his head he wears a strange helmet. It looks like the sun. His cloak goes all the way to the ground, or rather to the base on which he's standing. The cloak is carved so thin you can see right through it. It is like Mother's fancy lace tablecloth: fine, see-through patterns are cut into the wood, circle upon circle, each with a tiny symbol in the middle, some flames, some crosses, some stars.

"Watch," says the old man, picking up a more fragile carving from the higher bench. And carefully he slides two wings into slots in the figure's back. But he isn't finished yet. Out come more wings, each set smaller than the ones before. Each wing is really three wings that furl forward as if to embrace you. They are carved in such detail, Ko can feel the texture of each feather as he carefully traces their outlines with his forefinger.

When he looks up, the old man is smiling proudly. "It is beautiful, yes?" he says, lapsing into an accent Ko has never noticed before. "I made it to go with the manger scene, but it is too large, too overpowering. Even maybe a little scary." Again the old man runs one hand through his shaggy white hair.

"This I will sell to you – for a gift for your mother."

Eagerly Ko digs in his coat pocket. "How much?" he asks.

"Let me see. Hmmmm.... About 400 hours at one dollar an hour – that's 400 dollars."

Ko looks at the six dollars in his hand. Then he takes out the two dollar bill that Mother has given him and stares glumly at what he is holding.

"Hmmm.... That leaves 392 dollars. How about you sell me something?"

"But I don't have nothing."

"You have a soul. Would you sell me your soul?" asks the old man.

That's something Ko has never thought about. As he thinks it over, he studies the old man carefully and decides that maybe it's a riddle. Suddenly the answer comes to him.

"I can't sell it to you. Jesus already bought it."

A huge smile spreads across the old man's face.

"You are wise as a serpent. Yes, you are a good bargainer. I'll tell you how you pay me – with your work. You be my apprentice. You know what an apprentice is?"

Ko nods. "A helper."

"Yes, but a helper who is becoming like the master, a helper who becomes the master's eyes and hands, a helper who takes over the master's vision. My master



died in Russia. But now he lives here." The old man points to his breast. "And here." He holds out his hands. "Yes, my master lives in Canada, in Brazil, in Germany, and maybe even in Holland. Do they carve anything besides wooden shoes in Holland?"

Ko nods vigorously. "They carve windmills. I got one for Sinterklaas last year. My father made it."

"Ah, your father makes nice things, eh? Then maybe it's in the blood. You will be a good apprentice, for there is something of the father in the son."

As Ko carries home his big parcel, wrapped in several *Edmonton Journals*, he wonders how he's going to smuggle it into the house without mother seeing it. Should he tell her that he has become the old man's apprentice? No, then she'd make him take the angel back. She thinks the old man is crazy. Maybe she thinks he's like the mean witch in the Hansel and Gretel story in the big Dutch storybook.

In the stories Mother reads him kids are always getting lost in scary woods and meeting witches. But Ko loves the woods, especially in the valley. They are peaceful, awesome, yet welcoming. When the light from the sun filters through the tall, majestic trees, they fill him with the same kind of awe he felt when the old man showed him the angel – his angel.

Miep [The gift from strangers]

Glad to get Ko out of the house, Miep returns to the living room, where Fenna Bandstra is sitting red-eyed, sipping her tea. When Miep remembers how sorry she sometimes felt for herself because they were living in such a run-down house, she feels ashamed. Fenna had it much worse, living first in a garage with a dirt floor and then in a chicken coop.

Late in the fall Fenna and her family had moved into a two-story house. It had much more space than the chicken coop,

but when they moved in it had been vacant for at least two years. The windows were broken and the back door was found in the small shed behind the house. When she first went there to help Fenna and Frank fix it up, Miep had declared it to be hopeless, but not Fenna – she had been so desperate for more room, she beamed as she walked through the spacious kitchen and into the laundry room behind it. There she came to a sudden halt. Looking up through the gaping hole in the low roof of the laundry room, she had squealed with laughter. "Oh, look, Miep! A house with a skylight!"

Neighborhood kids – the nearest house was a block away – had turned one of the bedrooms upstairs into a clubhouse, to the great delight of Fenna's two youngest girls. And Lies, Fenna's oldest, was overjoyed at the prospect of getting her own room.

Fenna was a Frisian farm girl. Not from the city like Miep, so she is not used to much. But now she is in an awful state. She keeps breaking into tears.

"I knew I should have said No when she wanted to visit that boy," she sobs for the third or fourth time, "but him being all alone and seeing no one except Canadian farmers for months and her being nearly 18 and having made up her mind and Frank never wanting to say no to her and...." The rest is muffled by the large handkerchief she brings up to her nose.

"She hasn't heard from him for three months?"

"No. Not so much as a note since he quit that farmer. She sent two letters that came back. Right after Lies visited him he quit. He said he was going to find a job in some logging camp in B.C. But who knows where he is. First he wants to go homesteading in Peace River, then he's talking about working in the oil fields and next thing he's chopping trees in the mountains. For all we know one of those big trees fell on him and he's dead and...." And again the big hankey comes up. It is looking pretty soggy by now.

"I've written to his mother in Ontario, but she hasn't heard from him in over three months either. Oh, I knew that girl was in for heartache as soon as I saw the two of them together on the boat. That's where they met, you know, when...."

Miep wishes Gerrit were home. But even if he were, he probably would have found some excuse to leave as soon as Fenna started blubbering about Lies. Last time she visited Fenna, she sensed there was something wrong. All Fenna's humor and sparkle were gone, and Lies had deep, dark rings under her eyes. She was gaunt and pale, but even more beautiful than ever.

No wonder the girl hasn't been in

church for several weeks. On Monday Frank had finally gone to the church consistory to tell them. Two members of the consistory had come to see Lies two nights ago, but she refused to see them. Now she was up in her room and had not eaten anything for almost two days. Fenna wants Miep to come over.

"Frank is so angry. He's angry with me, with himself, with Lies, with that boy – he's especially angry with the church. Poortinga says that if she doesn't talk to the consistory, they'll have to put her under discipline."

Fenna wants Miep to try talking to Lies because they have always gotten along so well. And she wants Gerrit to talk to Frank because Gerrit has experience dealing with Poortinga and the consistory. Lies thinks it is high time the church gets a full-time minister instead of the tall, high talking preacher from America, who drops in once a month or so. He always stays at Poortinga's, too, so he probably has a pretty one-sided view of the congregation.

Miep catches herself. That's no way to think of an elder. Her view of Poortinga is colored too much by Gerrit's clash with the man. Once he even talked about going over to the man's house to give him a thrashing.

Poortinga is a thin, frail-looking man with the gift of gab, and being domineered by such a weak fellow seems to especially rile a sturdy man like Gerrit. He always refers to him as Mrs. Poortinga – when the kids aren't around to hear. The real Mrs. Poortinga is almost as tall as her man and her shoulders are twice as broad. "He can't rule the roost at home," says Gerrit, "so he throws his weight around in the consistory, and all those other dodos let him do whatever he wants."

Having poured out her soul, Fenna helps Miep wash dishes, and their talk drifts to canning and making sauerkraut. Miep taught Fenna and Lies the science of canning this past summer.

The previous summer, she had learned all about it from Mrs. Manning, the landlord's wife. The woman had even given her four dozen canning jars to start with. Now she had seven times that many – all crammed with vegetables and fruits of all sorts and lined up neatly on shelves in the basement. One week this past summer every day Gerrit had come home from work on the bus carrying at least one box of mason jars from the Safeway downtown. And she had filled them all.

Fenna was so proud of her accomplishment that she showed off her rows of colorful jars to every woman in the congregation who dropped in. She is now considered something of an authority on canning and has given lessons to several others.

"Don't lend anything to Annie vander

Continued on p.16..

The Lord's Prayer

Lead us not into temptation...

By J.H. Sillevs Smitt

Translated by Jack Van Meggelen

Back into the world

That gift from Jesus, called The Lord's Prayer, is now near its end. When we have prayed this sincerely and from the heart, we will be calm and at peace. We find our daily needs of body and soul met, feel rich in the Lord and accepting of our earthly situations.

Our 'today' has been assured because our heavenly Father cares for us. We are also at peace with our past. The chain has been broken and our sins have been forgiven. What more could we want?

It's time to say Amen. Security and deliverance are assured. Yet, it seems as if there is a slight reluctance to end the prayer. Everything has been said and yet....

It is time to get up, to return to the fast lanes of life, but that means facing the big bad evil world again. Jesus knows exactly what that means. Often he himself had to return to the demands of the day after being in the company of his Father in prayer. That is why Jesus adds one more petition to this prayer.

The 'future' is still ahead of us, with all its insecurities and dangers. After our prayers we get back to our daily reality. When we leave the inner room where we enjoyed communion with God, the everyday world awaits us. And we know our weakness. We know that our heart tends to be deceitful. The evil one is so clever and his power is substantial. That's why Jesus teaches us to pray this last petition: *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

Where is the temptation?

If we want to understand this petition *Lead us not into temptation*, we should look at James' words, when he says in his letter, that "when tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

These words of James contain a very large lesson in the reality of our life. God tempts no one. It is I, in my weakness, who cannot trust myself when faced with day-to-day situations. We have no



George Grosz, *Pillars of Society*

choice but to face our often dangerous and fearful lives full of tricky and subversive possibilities. We are always prone to the influence of evil.

If only we were stronger! But we are often so fickle and so full of ourselves; careless and indifferent. If we could just hang on to Jesus' words to his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." We are so quick to give in to our own desires and wishes. We fall for almost any silly excuse to fool ourselves. There seems to be no limit to our ability to deceive ourselves.

That is why if we want to know where temptation comes from, the answer will point most frequently to our selves. Thus temptation goes everywhere we go. There is no place where we are free from it. Old and young, all of us are vulnerable, every day again. Temptation can strike when I am sick or when I am healthy.

Whether we are rich or poor, married or single; whether we're employers or employees. Temptation exists inside the church as well as outside. I am tempted when I pray and when I don't pray. Evil is close when I speak as well as when I remain silent.

That does not mean that life itself is bad and that there is a flaw in creation. God created life so that in the end he saw that it was very good. The fault lies with me, and me only. All things are good in themselves, but how I put them to use determines the outcome.

The tongue is a wonderful instrument, but it can be used to curse and complain or to spout vulgarities and obscenities. The hand likewise is a wonder of God's creating powers, yet it can be used to steal and murder. In the same way, there is nothing wrong with gold, but it can easily be made into an idol. Thus the most beautiful things on earth can be turned to evil use. In every paradise there is a snake to tempt us.

Evil is not present in the things that surround us but in our own hearts. Whenever we mention temptation, people tend to think first of sexual sins such as lust, adultery, even rape or incest. Whether blatant or covered up, illicit sexual acts are sins that Jesus dealt with firmly. In the story of the prostitute caught in the act, he said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." And, of course, no one did. Instead they all walked away in shame.

Yet, sexual temptations, though perhaps the most obvious, are by no means the only or worst snare we face. And the problem is that this particular temptation receives so much emphasis that we are in danger of ignoring or belittling other temptations that are just as real and perilous. Sometimes through our upbringing we experience a strong aversion to these sexual temptations and we are quick to convict others of this sin. When our own transgressions become public, we may be tempted to rationalize our actions until we discover that we have transgressed the moral and ethical rules for living and have caused pain and upheaval for those we love.

Much subtler and therefore twice as dangerous are the temptations that have an ethical or spiritual dimension. A priest, an old and very wise man, once said that people had confessed to him every kind of sin one could think of, plus some. But, he said he had never heard anyone confess with a contrite, repentant heart to being possessed by the love of money.

I should also mention the sin of arrogance with its hundreds of shades and variations. Self-complacency, indifference, self-pity, self-righteousness, prejudice, and many other forms of conceit can be added to this list. It is important to keep in mind that there is often no clear-cut demarcation between what is good and evil; what is of Christ and what is of the devil. The gap between these two is usually very blurry to us. God alone can see when we first step over this line.

Evil would never make an inroad into our lives if its work were very obvious. Instead, evil is capable of disguising itself as reasonable and therefore may appear good. Just look into your own life.

How clear is it to us when habit turns into monotony, or frugality becomes greed? When does resolve become bullheadedness? When does caring become meddling? Can you tell when sensitivity becomes sentimentality, or when sorrow turns to self-pity?

It is unlikely that wandering across this line requires a big step on our part. All it takes is a tiny little detour from the narrow road of following Jesus. Just as a flooding river can press against the dikes with unrelenting pressure seeking one weak spot to break through, so the evil one never stops seeking to entice us. He looks for a soft spot with unrelenting preoccupation, and mercilessly will never exempt anyone, especially not in their most difficult or vulnerable moments. He knows our weaknesses and the price we are willing to pay.

The narrow road

In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught us with the well-known words, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

On the broad road you can do whatever you like with your money, your time, your mouth or your body. Life is short, enjoy it! Whether you insult God or hurt your neighbor makes no difference. On that road there are no norms for life or rules for love. Don't ever let it bother you, it might spoil your fun! That road is very wide indeed!

The narrow road in Jesus' teaching is the road for life. It is safe and reliable. It can be an amazingly enjoyable and companionable road on which we travel with light-hearted freedom. But that road is narrow. One step to the right or left and you may become entrapped in quicksand or step on a mine.

The narrow road is the one where we follow after Jesus, and keep company with him. On that narrow road we stay focused on God and travel with his people. It is a steady, well-kept and beautiful road. A road full of blessing and happiness.

But it is a narrow road and it gives us only one choice to live by. That means being led and moved not by our own ambition

The Lord's Prayer/Sports

but by the love and truth of Jesus.

In the ancient Greek world the legend of the Sirens was well known. Sailors had to navigate a narrow and treacherous passage between two steep rocks and needed all their attention to stay on course. From the rocks the Sirens would sing an incredibly beautiful and tempting song, but if a sailor should pay heed, he would flounder on the rocks. The only way through the passage required the sailor to ignore the songs and to stay on course.

Every Christian has heard the Siren song and therefore prays continuously, "Father, I know my weakness, I know my foolishness, I know the lure of the evil one, I know how easily I mismanage my way by forgetting your commandment to love. Lead me in such a way through life that I will not become entrapped or maimed but, that I, following Jesus, live a life that honors you and blesses others."

Deliver us from the evil one

One of the greatest difficulties in life is that evil looks so much like virtue, and good deeds can appear to be like evil. Solomon prayed a very wise prayer when

he asked for a discerning heart to distinguish between right and wrong. But even if God has granted us an acute ability to discern quickly between good and evil, that does not mean we are home-free. Have you ever felt the undercurrent of the ocean?

The evil one is called the 'prince of this world'. When we fall under his power we become like putty in his hands; we get sucked into the undertow of his influence. That's why Jesus adds the words, *but deliver us from the evil one.* "Father, whenever I stray too close to the lion's cage in my ignorance and stubbornness, and get grabbed by the claws of evil, will you then in your great power deliver me and all who pray to you, from this destruction. Only you can save us."

The enemy from within

I believe it is easier to withstand evil than to honestly pray: *lead us not into temptation.* When we earnestly pray not to be led into temptation then we won't be led into it. The evil one has only as much power over us as we grant him. So we are responsible when we allow him in and offer him lodging in the dark secret corner of our

Blake, Temptations



Final thoughts from a sports fan

So here I sit in my classroom. It's a cold, wet November afternoon. The kids have gone home. Teachers are shuffling through the halls in their typical state of pre-Christmas fatigue. And I have a sports column to write - my final column in fact. I've been at it for eight years; sharing my views on the sports world. I won't pretend I haven't injected my own biases into the columns (it is a column after all). I'll admit that I'm a slightly cynical, left-of-center sports fan. I distrust BIG. I'm suspicious of bigger-than-life people and movements. I sneer at new popular trends like the Atkins Diet and \$200 "hybrid" athletic shoes.

I may have been cranky at times: cranky about high salaries, pro wrestling, corporate sponsors, NBA basketball, Don Cherry. I have probably also annoyed some Ontarians with my unabashed love for and defense of all things West Coast. Still, I like to think that I've also tried to celebrate things that I thought were worth celebrating: acts of beauty and grace on the field, the communal potential of the Olympics, and (most importantly) the Vancouver Canucks.

Like most areas of life, the sports world has reflected (and will continue to do so) the spirits and values of the age. We live in selfish, cynical times. The greed and self-absorption that creep so easily into sports is a reflection of that. At the same time, what happens in the arena and the stadium has a great deal of cultural currency - which creates opportunities for a radical, reformed worldview to shape and transform that culture. The lack of grace we see in sports makes it all the more poignant when it is shown. Just as the business world needs godly men and women to provide a model of integrity and fairness, so too our playing fields and locker rooms need sports figures who will become agents of change and light and reconciliation. Goodness and justice can and do exist in our sporting activities.

Last Sunday I was sitting in B.C. Place Stadium with 54,000 other football fans, watching an amazing football game. There was a sea of orange Lions fans with ripples of Rough Rider green. The lead went back and forth. There were

heart where we secretly harbor desires and greed.

Watch out for the enemy from within. Watch out for the little traitor inside your own heart. Do not lose sight of the little double-dealer that lives in your own heart when faced with temptation from outside. Do you understand that it is this seemingly insignificant little deceiver within us who opens the door to his taskmaster?

We certainly don't want to come under the unlimited power of evil. Most of us are afraid of becoming really corrupt, but we are equally afraid of becoming truly virtuous. What we want is a square circle. We really want a

little furtive excitement that comes with sin; just some pleasure and honor, but without becoming possessed by dissipation or pride.

Let me put it another way. We don't want to fall into the hands of the devil but we love to pick up the rewards he seems to offer. We want the pleasure but not the burden of sin. So our greatest difficulty is not that we remain upright under temptation but that we faithfully persist in praying with a humble and sincere heart, *Our Father... lead us not into temptation.* It means that the real struggle is deep in our hearts.

We must radically shun evil and fiercely cling to God; in other

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides



impossible field goals and long bombs and dramatic end zone interceptions and I loved it. The fans started "The Wave" and it buzzed around the stadium for a good ten minutes. I was immersed in a fantastic, thrilling football game and all my weird little skepticisms and criticisms about sports slipped away. There was beauty and skill and an intoxicating energy in the building and I was loving sports again.

I will continue to yearn for those times when sports is about the grace and excitement of the game: when it showcases created beings pushing the limits of their God-given skills. I suppose I will also continue to mourn and rage against all the junk that compromises it.

I am thankful to Harry der Nederlanden for the freedom to share my thoughts every month. He has been a supportive, empowering editor. Thank you to the readers of the *Christian Courier* for allowing me to speak my mind over the past eight years. I have learned much and have enjoyed the

opportunity to be part of this community with you - one which wrestles with what the word of God means in every aspect of life. I have been blessed by being part of such a group of people. Thank you.

Shalom,
Tim Antonides



We thank Tim Antonides for sharing with us his reflections on sports and other cultural events over the years. Christians read the signs of the times and wrestle with the spirits everywhere, and the area of sports is certainly no exception; in fact, Tim has often shown us that it is a window to dramas larger than those played out on the ice or the field. He has earned a break and we wish him Godspeed.

Any aspiring writers on sports or popular culture are invited to give us a try. We need someone to fill Tim's shoes.

Harry der Nederlanden

words we always choose for truth and love.

And now we ask those two questions again. Can you pray this petition, and do you want to pray it? *Can you pray it?* means, have you made a conscious choice for truth and against the lie; for God and against evil; for Jesus and against yourself? *Do you want to pray this?* Jesus again challenges you to reaffirm the primary choice in life: to live a life of self-indulgence or to deny yourself.

Lord teach us to pray honestly and from the heart, *Our Father... Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.*

Family

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

The ending of one year and the beginning of another challenges me to dig into my family tree. I am especially curious about my two grandmothers. Unfortunately, I did not know either of them well. My maternal grandmother died before I was born and my paternal grandmother never traveled to Canada after my family emigrated from Europe when I was ten. Yet, their lives are of interest to me. I literally harass my mother for shreds of information of rapidly fading memories as if I want to hold on to the relentless passage of time.

There is no denying I am sentimental about the speed of time. And with the ending of another year I always feel a sense of loss. So, unless I can harness the memories I have of the year gone by, I am afraid I have not fully appreciated the hundreds of hours that were entrusted to me this year. With that in mind I have two photos of my grandmothers and their families on the mantle of my fireplace. Beside these black and white photos from the 1930's, I have a basket of sea shells, collected from various beaches around the world to remind me of the richness of my life.

I think I am curious about my grandmothers because I wonder about the personalities that spawned my adventuring father and risk-taking mother. I do not believe I am looking for something insidious from the elusive family gene pool, considering both my grandmothers' simple and plain lives. Nor do I secretly wish they had been groundbreaking women who valiantly took their destiny in their own hands no matter what their circumstances. I only wonder if their lives were really as plain and simple as my mother has told me so far.

And so, last week I again plagued my mother about my two grandmothers. This time I took my basket of sea shells along to share a bit of my life. I showed her a moon shell, a double rise shell and a rugged oyster shell and began telling her where I had found them.

Suddenly, she reached over into the basket and pulled out a whelk shell. She became very quiet as she turned it over and over in her hand. Finally, she looked inside the shell and said, "This whelk shell reminds me of both your grandmothers."

"How so?" I asked.

"See the beautiful tinge of alabaster blue on the outside of the shell?" she said.

"Yes," I answered.

"Do you also see how simple and plain the shell itself is?" she continued.

"Yes, I do," I said staring at its smooth exterior.

"But look closely now," she said. "See how it has ragged and chipped edges here and there by the opening?"

"Yes," I said again.

"Do you also see the gaping hole in the shell's exterior?"

Of grandmothers, mothers and sea shells

"Yes, I do." I answered becoming puzzled.

"Do you also see the firm and solid central column that would under normal conditions hold the muscles in place should the animal wish to hide in the shell?"

"Yes," I said feeling confused.

"Well," said my mother, "the blue alabaster tinge reminds me of both of your grandmothers' beauty inside and out. The simple and plain exterior, on the other hand, remind me of the simplicity of their lives. They worked hard and had no money for extras. The chipped and ragged edges, remind me of how they were often tossed to and fro because of life's ups and downs. And the gaping hole in the exterior of the shell resembles the terrible wounds both grandmothers experienced in their lives.

"Your maternal grandmother had a lung disease and was confined to her bed for many years, after which she died, leaving behind a husband, four daughters - of which I am one - and two young sons. Your paternal grandmother, on the other hand, nursed her husband for many years. He also had a serious lung disease and eventually died, leaving behind your grandmother with

two sons - of which your father is one - and two young daughters. All of this was very sad for your grandparents as well as your father and I."

She paused and then continued, "But what do you see when you look through the gaping hole of the shell? See this column? It is strong, solid and straight.

This column presents your grandmothers' strengths when they were going through all their sorrows.

"And you know what? The column can be seen best through the gaping hole. Because it is when you have sorrows and difficulties in your life, you find out how strong you really are!

"And that is the legacy your grandmothers left you. Yes, it was a life of simplicity but more than that, it was a life of courage and strength!"

I looked at my mother and realized the deep sorrow she experienced as a young woman when she lost her mother so many years ago. But I also realized how she has throughout her life carried all her burdens with quiet dignity and strength.

And so, at the end of this year I am not only grateful for the richness of my life but especially for the legacy my mother has finally passed on to me.

Arlene Van Hove is now on sabbatical from Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Looking for God in a strange land:
Advent themes

Continued from p 13

Net," says Fenna. "She borrowed my wringer twice and each time I had to walk all the way to her house to get it back. The same thing happened with my big pan. If you don't go over there and get it back, she just keeps it."

"That's because her husband works at night and he's always too tired to do anything. Their place is a mess. The man is always falling asleep. In church he's already nodding off by the time we've done reading Scripture."

"Well, maybe this way they'll stop having babies. She told me she's had six in the last five years."

They both giggle, then Fenna lapses into silence, obviously thinking of her own daughter.

As Miep looks out the kitchen window across the fields, she sees someone, a man, slowly making his way down the path. He's carrying a large box on one shoulder, but every so often he stops to lower it to the ground and catch his breath.

"Do you know who that is?" she asks Fenna.

"Yes, it's the burgomaster coming to see your preserves."

Now he's dragging the big box behind him across the deep snow. The box is so large it reaches almost to his waist.

"Isn't that the man from downtown who sometimes sells horse meat?" asks Fenna.

"No, I think it's the Canadian Santa Claus!" cries Miep, bumping Fenna with her hip.

And she turns out to be right. A few minutes later the man is pounding on the door, and when she opens it, the big box comes tumbling into her kitchen along with a cascade of snow, followed by a man with round, red cheeks, thick lips and a huge protruding belly that shakes as he booms with laughter. He brings almost the entire outdoors with him and he's talking in a voice loud as a church bell well before Miep attunes herself to what he's saying.

"...and I was picking through all those boxes of clothes from the States and thought of you folks and all those Dutchy clothes so I picked out some stuff. They were almost all girls' and women's duds, though, so your boys are out of luck. Is that

a pot of tea on the stove?"

And he clomps across the kitchen, shedding snow all the way to the stove.

Miep hurries to get him a cup. Glancing at his large hands and thick fingers, she decides not to give him one of the pretty cups from her fancy service.

"You must be Gerrit's friend, Sam," stutters Miep, as she holds out the cup and saucer to him and he drops down on one of the kitchen chairs like a sack of potatoes falling off a truck.

"Where is Gerrit? Oh, yes, I'm sorry. Yes, yes, I'm Sam. Slam bam, here comes Sam."

Struggling up out of his chair, big, bulky Sam sends the kitchen table skidding over as he sticks out a huge red hand. His grasp is surprisingly gentle, for she expected her hand to be crushed.

"I'm glad to meet you, Miep. If I'd met you in Woodward's downtown, I'd have known you were Miep, because Gerrit said you were the prettiest girl in town, and he was right."

Sitting down, he almost misses his chair and grapples with it for a moment.

"Who's that savage attacking your box? Is she one of those primitive Frisians that have settled around here? Look at her attacking that box!"

Fenna is tearing away at the paper tape holding the box together. There seem to be several layers of it. She laughs at Sam and goes on tearing off long strips.

"That's my friend Fenna Bandstra, and she's not savage - just curious." And she joins her friend to tear off the last of the tape and lift the flaps of the huge cardboard box.

Fenna dives in and holds aloft the first prize. "Look, a chicken!"

"Not a chicken, woman. A turkey. Okay, it's not a very big turkey, but I stole it, so it had to fit under my coat."

"What!" cries Miep. "You didn't! Tell me you didn't!"

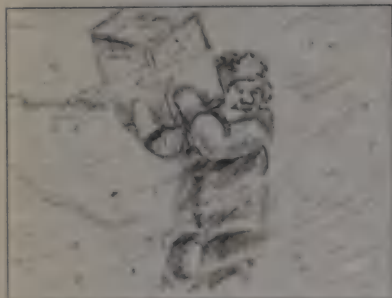
Sam just throws back his head and roars with laughter.

Who is this man, wonders Miep, as Fenna holds up a bright red dress; he's a cross between a pirate and Santa Claus.

"Don't look so anxious," he chortles. "I swiped all of it from the diocesan downtown, so I did them a favor."

"You mean you're a deacon?"

Story



Sam just about chokes on his tea. "That's it!" he hoots delightedly. "Yes, yes, I'm from the deacons. That's me – a deacon, a doer of good works."

He seems so delighted by this idea that Miep is quite sure it isn't true, but Fenna is waving a dress in front of her face.

"This one's your size, Miep. Try it on. I'm trying on this red one."

As Fenna starts toward the bedroom, she bends and gives Sam a quick kiss on the cheek. "Thank you, Santa Deacon!"

Gerrit [In the basement]

In the basement Gerrit gropes for the string to the light bulb above his work bench. The darkness down here is absolute. At the landlord's advice, he has stacked hay bales around the foundation of the house, including the windows, to keep frost out of the basement. It works quite well, especially if you scoop snow over the bales. But it covers up all the windows. It also traps the basement smells – a combination of earth, old cement, potatoes, sauerkraut and, yes, the toilet chair.

Every time he comes down, he plays a little game. In the darkness, he counts the steps from the foot of the stairs, makes a sharp right turn, counts a few more steps and then reaches up to where the string should be. It never is. He always ends up flailing for it as he's doing now.

After clicking on the light, he reaches underneath the work bench, removes some old boards and a piece of upholstery cloth and pulls out the ranch house and barn that he has been making for Ko. The roof of the barn lifts off and the doors are hinged. The small buildings took lots of planning and many hours of careful work, but now they are almost finished. As he studies his handiwork critically, he concludes that they look shamefully clunky. No matter. Ko will be happy.

Putting them to the side, he reaches farther underneath the bench and carefully brings up the thing that took him even more hours to make – many more. It's a copy of a fancy baker's cabinet that he saw hanging on the wall in the apartment of an elderly English lady. It reminded him of one that hung in his mother's kitchen, but this one was completely made of wood, even the

drawers. The lady had allowed him to measure it and make a drawing of it. The carving on the front and the patterns of inlaid wood on the small drawers had demanded great patience on his part, and a lot of trial and error, but he was pleased with the result. He wasn't a complete novice: years ago, in high school he'd had a good woodworking teacher. The small box for stamps that he'd made then combined carving and inlay like this. But this was many times larger.

He runs his fingers over the intricate patterns. One final buffing with steel wool and it's finished. He wonders at the great sense of satisfaction the piece communicates to him every time he handles it. It is almost as if by some magic a medley of moods has been stored in the wood which is released whenever he strokes it, traveling through his fingertips up along his arm into his body – like the arm of a record player picks up music from the record.

He tests the little drawers, admiring once again their perfect fit. The original had dovetailing on the larger drawers, the ones for rice and macaroni and such, but he hadn't attempted to copy that. Still, the cabinet looked every bit as expertly made. The names of the various condiments were etched on each drawer in Dutch. He had considered doing it in English, but nostalgia had won out.

The thought dawned on him that he has been telling himself that the long hours of work in the basement are an expression of his love for Miep. But it has probably also been an escape, a nostalgic retreat to a boyhood hobby. His stamp box had won first prize at the art fair, and his mother had been so proud. Even his father had taken his pipe out of his mouth and nodded approvingly. Maybe when he started the cabinet he had even been looking for a way to escape Miep's presence in the evenings. Sitting across from her, he had often felt himself such a failure. He wasn't sure what exactly he had been hoping for in Canada, but it wasn't this. Miep had handled herself better than he in this new country.

Turning, he gazes back into the darkness of the basement. The light of the naked bulb reflects back off of row after row of gleaming mason jars crammed with everything from bright orange carrots to blood red beets, from deep golden peaches to pink pears. There is enough food stored in this basement, he calculates, to feed the whole family all winter and into spring and summer.

He had done his share too, of course. Under the burlap bags in darkness at the far end of the basement stood several sacks of potatoes as well as some carrots and beets that hadn't been canned. He wasn't sure how long they'd last. Already he had given some away to recent immi-

grants who hadn't been able to put in a garden. It seemed incredible that he, and Miep, had raised so much food on such a small piece of land. The fruit from B.C. had been the only thing they had bought – by the box.

Walking over to the shelves, he runs his fingers over the cold, smooth surfaces of the jars. Do they convey the same sort of music to Miep's fingers as the cabinet does to his? But these jars are much more practical than the fancy thing he has made to hang on the wall. The drawers probably won't be used for the things printed on them. The one in his mother's kitchen was used for everything except spices and condiments – buttons, thread, safety pins, matches, stamps and hundreds of other odds and ends – all the tiny things that hold families together.

The floorboards shake overhead, spilling down dust. Miep and Fenna are in a silly mood. Every so often when they get together they carry on like schoolgirls. Last time, they were doing some baking together and began pelting each other. When he got home after work, supper hadn't even been started and there was dough and whipped egg-white all over the kitchen. When he came in and looked around a bit flummoxed, the two women had nearly collapsed on the floor with laughter, pointing at him as though he were the one who looked silly. For a moment he'd wondered whether they had been sampling his plum wine.

This time a huge box of used clothes from the States had set them off. He couldn't even sit at the table and drink his coffee in peace. They kept emerging from the bedroom wearing different dresses, skirts, pants, blouses and what not in all sorts of weird combinations and regardless of size to prance around and flaunt themselves in the kitchen.

That nutty Fenna is usually the instigator. She even jumped up on a kitchen chair and shamelessly did high kicks right in front of him like some 1920s flapper. Embarrassed, he'd escaped into the basement – to the derisive hoots of the two women.

In the total darkness that falls after he turns off the workbench light, he forgets to count his steps and barks his shins on a wooden crate near the stairs. After rubbing the pain out of his leg, he starts up the stairs and promptly bangs his head, forgetting to stoop. He's getting quite a battering. High time to rig up a switch at the top of the stairs so he can turn the light on and off like civilized people.

Reaching the top of the stairs, he gets another whiff of the toilet chair, reminding him that it is time to empty the tall pail of human excrement, and he moans at the indignities bound up with the human flesh.

Ko, Miep, Gerrit [Coming home]

Plowing home through the snow single file, each of the threesome is thrust into his own thoughts. The path is partly blown over and they are bucking a stiff wind from the northwest which picks up the loose snow and whips it into their faces. Gerrit, in the lead, does not look up at the stars, but lowers his head into the wind to keep the snow out of his eyes. It is way past Ko's bedtime, but they could hardly leave him home alone. Gerrit marvels at what he has seen and heard tonight.

He had not expected Poortinga to show up tonight at Frank and Fenna's, certainly not carrying gifts. To say nothing of a large bottle of wine. Poortinga's wife had been loaded down like a camel when they unexpectedly dropped in. He'd tried to signal to Miep that he wanted to go, but now he is glad, very glad, that they stayed. That Poortinga wasn't such a bad sort after all.

He had gone to great lengths to contact the field man in B.C., who had managed to track down Lies's boyfriend, or rather, fiancée. It turned out that the farmer out of spite had not forwarded Lies's letters to the boy, and the boy had sent his letter to Lies's old address. According to Poortinga, the boy would be here the middle of next week. Well, he was in for some hard times.

Miep's head is spinning, partly from the wine and *boerejongens*, but mostly at what she had seen and heard. First, the surprise gift for Lies from her son, her little Ko. Then Gerrit's parting hug with Poortinga. Were those tears she had spied springing in Poortinga's eyes? Where had Ko gotten that gorgeously carved angel?

When they arrived at Fenna's Lies was still up in her room, but Fenna said she had taken some soup and was no longer breaking into tears every time her mother tried to talk with her. When Ko said he had a gift for Lies, showing Fenna the newspaper-wrapped package, Fenna had looked at her, but she had just shrugged her shoulders. She had no idea what it was. Ko had a whispered conversation with his father before they left, but when she asked him what was in the package, he had just blushed and smiled.

Fenna sent him upstairs to bring his gift to Lies himself, and ten minutes later Lies had come downstairs carrying that remarkable angel. Ko once again blushed furiously as Lies marveled at the gift and kissed him in front of everyone. Miep knew her young son liked Lies very much, because his eyes lit up every time she came to babysit.

All that Miep had to give was a package of used clothes that she and Fenna

See Advent themes p. 19.

Opinion



Yes ... but

Bert Hielema

Airplane exhaust and acid rain

Once a real estate appraiser, always a real estate appraiser. Whenever I travel – and with kids all over I do go places – I look at what is being built and where. Driving from St. Paul-Minneapolis a few weeks ago on the way to Iowa, I saw warehouses and strip malls going up everywhere. Entire subdivisions too, many far away from employment centres. Already the USA has 18 square feet of merchandise space for every shopper, almost double that of Canada which has a mere 11 square feet.

I hate shopping. I am a buyer. And a frugal one to boot – except books, of course. Just yesterday I bought two more, one to give away. I remember once overhearing somebody saying upon receiving a book, "Thanks, but I already have one." Well, we are not all the same.

Last week, driving from Toronto toward Stratford, I saw similar scenes: hectic activity in the construction of industrial, commercial and residential buildings. It must be the cheap money that makes investors flee the stagnant stock market and low yields on savings to go into real estate.

I read last week that American money is going wild near Toronto airport. There they have bought large tracts of land, trusting that increased air traffic will generate sufficient industrial activity to fill the tens of millions of square feet of warehouse space.

Is the future that bright for air transport? Many seem to think so. In the 1970's our good Feds bought many thousands of acres near Pickering with ambitious plans for a huge airport to complement Pearson International. To them too the future must look bright to revive this project. Initially this new facility would replace three small airfields in that area, but they plan to gradually expand it to rival the Toronto one, where recently a new terminal has been opened, costing a cool \$4 billion, making Toronto International one of the most expensive for the poor airlines, all of which are flying deep in the red.

So is air travel really the wave of the future? For one thing, flying is highly polluting. Planes burn fuel at a ferocious rate. In a speech on Climate Change in September, Prime Minister Tony Blair said that by 2030 aircraft emissions could be responsible for a quarter of Britain's total contribution to global warming. It already causes ten percent now. And the sky is the limit, because, when Kyoto was concocted – you may remember that treaty which is supposed to curb greenhouse gases starting in 2012 – air traffic was excluded. Now we discover that a ton of Carbon Dioxide emitted at high altitude could be three or four times as damaging as that at ground level. So it's no surprise that the European Union is starting efforts to curb pollution high up there.

As it stands now, air traffic there is growing at 5 percent per year, and will thus double by 2020. There is, of course, a very

simple solution: quit flying. Europe could do that. It has a viable alternative to airplane travel: a vast – and fast – and efficient rail net work. This is not the case in North America. On our continent, with trillions of dollars invested in airplanes and its infrastructure and nothing to fall back on except cars, it comes as no surprise that the USA has decided to pull out of the five-year-old talks to develop a voluntary program for reducing pollution from aircraft engines.

Reduction simply means fewer planes. They did say, however, that despite not being able to reach an agreement, they are committed "to identifying and implementing strategies" for meaningful emission reductions from the aviation sector. Meaningless chatter, of course, because the only way to reduce these killing gases is to cause less of them to escape into the air we breathe. As it stands now, major airports already have greenhouse gas emissions that are greater than those caused by refineries and power plants and will grow by leaps and bounds in the years to come.

As with Kyoto, so it is with airplane curtailment, the USA is dead-set against any measure that will hamper industrial or commercial development. So respiratory diseases, cancers, Climate Change will continue unabated. Unless. Unless we run into a fuel crisis. And we will before too long. In moving people or goods, the faster we do this, the more energy we burn.

As a runner I know that it takes a lot more energy to run even a little bit quicker than my normal speed. That's true also for driving and especially for flying. Planes consume the most of all per ton/mile. It's highly unlikely that the commercial airline industry as we now know it will survive. Air travel will become exceedingly expensive as we advance further into the 21st century. Only the very rich and the military will be able to afford the dwindling supplies.

Pickering airport? Forget it. It'll never get off the ground. All those warehouses? They'll probably be used to grow pot as did that former brewery in Barrie.

A bit more about the air we travel in and the air we breathe in. I found 'Google Scholar' amazing in my search for info. I punched in 'Airplane Exhausts' and, pronto, a study by Katta Murty of the University of Michigan popped up. Her summary is in typical academic style: "The puzzle of climate is that atmospheric and oceanic temperatures have increased much more than can be explained by changes in the concentration of greenhouse gases. We suggest that part of the reason for this phenomenon maybe the increasing volume of jet airline traffic round the clock and around the globe which is contributing to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases in the stratosphere than in the whole atmosphere. This indi-

cates that the increasing volumes of airplane traffic worldwide have serious environmental consequences, perhaps more serious than the ozone hole phenomenon."

Enough of that jargon. Back to my own words. After pointing out that global warming, especially in the Arctic, is rising rapidly, she compares the amount of pollutants airplanes are dumping in the upper atmosphere (visible in the white condensation trails) with other modes of transport. Her call to NorthWest Airlines revealed that jets consume slightly over 0.025 gallons/passenger mile. Her own University of Michigan bus system needs 0.00344 gallons to transport one passenger for one mile, so, based in both cases on 80 percent occupancy, jets use 7.3 times more fuel than buses.

As exhaust left up at 35,000 feet is 4 times worse than ground-level contaminants, airplanes actually cause almost 30 times more damage than buses. And how about our treasured automobile? Well, it doesn't fare all that well. Based on the average car running at 25 miles (40 km) per gallon (3.78 litres) – a bit more than 9 km per litre – and unrealistically assuming that four of the five seats are used, she calculated that cars are 2.3 times as wasteful as a bus, but about 3 times more economical than an airplane. However, even at 1.2 person per car – the average load – it's more environmentally friendly to drive than to fly, because of the fourfold damage done by airplanes high up there.

Still, ground-level pollutants are bad and getting worse. Let me single out three areas: China, the USA and Ontario. China first, which is sucking in not only more and more of the world's jobs, but also much of the world's oil, and consequently is a major polluter, so much so that the country is awash in "out of control" acid rain, according to its own news sources. The two major causes are the rapidly growing number of cars and an even faster use of coal as the country struggles to cope with energy shortages and meet power demand. China now is the world's largest source of soot and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions, thanks to coal which fires three-quarters of the country's power plants. Estimates are that China and its 1.2 billion people will burn more than 1.8 billion tonnes of coal in 2005 – a major source of greenhouse gases – also emitting 28 million tonnes of SO₂, the prime source for acid rain.

The exploding use of fertilizer contributes to a growing incidence of nitrates – another factor in the rapid rise of acid rain.

Are things better in the USA? No, they are not. America is not only waging war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Its biggest conflict receives little attention: its war against nature, with even more severe consequences. We know that Mr Bush is dead-set against Kyoto. This means that the USA will go the way of China ... more pollution.

Just as in China, the dirty secret about U.S. energy production is that coal is about to become an even filthier factor in the future. Already more than 50 percent of U.S. electricity comes from coal-burning plants. This part in the power picture is projected to spike upward in coming years, as utilities turn to those black lumps as an alternative to increasingly scarce natural gas and higher oil prices. According to a New York Times survey, more than 100 new coal plants are expected to come on stream.

Unless Congress passes the bipartisan bill sponsored by Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman that curbs global warming by regulating carbon emissions, there is nothing in U.S. law to force the power companies to limit the carbon dioxide they will pump into our lungs.

Ontario? Its government has promised to phase out its 5 coal-powered generators by 2007. However, this will only happen if we by then have a combination of a severe economic depression and sky-high electricity rates, sharply curtailing electricity use.

At any rate, the world-wide greater coal use is increasingly counter-productive. It will shorten the average life span of our 6.3 billion by two years through a rapid rise in global warming, causing 150 million premature deaths! Acid rain will reduce agricultural production everywhere, especially in China, already experiencing drastically diminishing harvests. We, in our unwavering participation in the Consumer Society through wider use of coal and oil, are ultimately the victims.



Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont. His website has been updated, now including all past columns as well as other writings: www.geocities.com/hielemab

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Classifieds

Advent themes *Continued from p. 17*

had selected from the large box delivered by Sam. But the best gift of the evening had been delivered by Poortinga. She had never seen a person undergo such a transformation in one evening as Lies. After hearing the news from Poortinga, Lies had hugged the man and run upstairs. A while later, she had come down again wearing one of the dresses Miep had brought her. She truly was a lovely girl. It was no wonder that Ko was smitten with her.

But that angel – where on earth had it come from? She was filled with wonder.

Ko is staggering along in his mother and father's footsteps, groggy with sleep. He is having second thoughts. Having successfully smuggled his angel upstairs to his room, because Mother and Father were talking earnestly in the living room and never even noticed him come home, he put his ear to the pipe to hear what they were saying. They didn't know that if he lay on the floor with his ear to the pipe, he could overhear almost everything they said, as long as the radio wasn't on.

Mother was talking about Lies. She was afraid Lies didn't want to live any more. The words had made him shiver more than the cold. Then Father told Mother that he knew what that was like, and he had told her about standing on the High Level Bridge downtown and looking down into the water and wishing he could end it all. The words had almost made Ko

sick to his stomach. He had crawled away from the pipe into his bed and shivered uncontrollably for a long time.

When Mother had come up to tell him they were going to Fenna's to bring some presents for Lies to cheer her up because she was very sad, he had suddenly grabbed his angel and taken it along. Now he wishes he'd kept it for Mother. But Father had shown him the cabinet he'd secretly been making for Mother and said that Ko could help him finish it and they would give it together.

Knowing that Lies was going to marry some guy he'd never seen, a lumberjack, almost made him regret that he had given her his angel. Almost – until he remembered the look on her face when she had opened the present. The way her eyes had sparked back into life, changing from black coals to diamonds – that made it all worthwhile after all.

Pausing to catch his breath, he looks up at the night sky and is filled with amazement.

"Mom... Dad! Look!" he points up into the sky. "It's an angel!"

Mother and Father stop and gaze upward. Father looks down at him and grins. "That's not an angel, Ko. That's called the northern lights."

Mother bends her face toward his and whispers: "Your father is blind. It is an angel."

Harry der Nederlanden



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Classifieds/Job Opportunities

Birthday	Obituaries	Job Opportunities - Ministry
 <p>Jannetje VanderLaan (DeVries)</p> <p>will celebrate her 90th Birthday on Jan. 3, 2005. We thank the Lord for her long life and the blessing she is to all of us.</p> <p>Her family is having an Open House on Sunday, January 2 from 2-4 in the "Willow Room" at her home at Evergreen Terrace, 275 Main St E (#106) Grimsby ON L3M 5N8. We invite all her friends and relatives to help us celebrate this happy occasion. <i>Best Wishes only.</i></p>	<p>Peacefully the Lord called unto himself GEERLOF (Gerry) VAN STARKENBURG on November 9th, 2004.</p> <p>Dear Husband of Janna of Townsend</p> <p>Dear Father of:</p> <p>Dirk & Cathy of Micksburg Sue Dam of Australia Keesje († 1962) Jack & Debbie of Pembroke Gerald & Evelyn of Pembroke William & Corrie of Calgary AB Casey & fiancée Katherine of Calgary AB Mary Ann & Ken Benjamins of Jarvis Jane & Fred Wouda of Cobden</p> <p>Loving Grandfather of 26 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Also survived by 6 brothers and sisters all of the Netherlands.</p> <p>Funeral service was held in the Zion Christian Reformed Church with Rev. Harold VanderSluis and Rev. Ken Benjamins officiating.</p> <p>Psalm 23</p> <p>WILHELMINA PETRONELLA DEKKER</p> <p>August 10, 1918 - December 7, 2004</p> <p>Peacefully at Shalom Manor in Grimsby at the age of 86. We praise God for her life and know that she is in her eternal home.</p> <p>Loving mother of Henry & Olga Dekker of Grimsby, Ann Whetton of Grimsby, Nellie & Jerry Krall of Flamborough, and George & Fran Dekker of Grimsby. Grandmother of 21 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. She leaves behind her sisters Nell (Martin) Weverink and Margaret (Jack) Groot, and sister-in-law Trijn Tensen, all of Aylmer and her brothers Jo (Judi) Tensen and Henk (Grietje) Tensen, both in the Netherlands. Predeceased by her husband Joost (1992), her daughter Maria (1959), and her son John (1978).</p> <p>The funeral service was held on Friday, December 10 at the Mountainview CRC in Grimsby. Donations to Shalom Manor, in her memory, would be appreciated (12 Bartlett Ave, Grimsby ON L3M 4N5). Many thanks to the staff at Shalom Manor for their loving care & compassion for the past six years.</p>	<p>BRAMPTON SECOND CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH</p> <p>situated in the Greater Toronto Area, is in search of a ministry team to provide leadership in the following key areas</p> <p>as identified through our congregational visioning process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamic preaching, mentoring, training and development • Providing relational and mentored ministries to give our youth a sense of belonging • Equipping members to provide spiritual, emotional and physical support through pastoral care • Enthusiastic worship • Educating all age groups and challenging members toward deepened spiritual vitality and understanding, effective ministry and greater fellowship • Administration which enables all team members to communicate and coordinate effectively <p>Individuals qualified in one or more of the above areas are invited to submit their resume to office@bramptonsecondcrc.com (website: www.bramptonsecondcrc.com).</p> <p>HOPE CRC BRANTFORD</p> <p>invites applications for a part-time position for ASSISTANT PASTOR.</p> <p>If you are an ordained minister and would be interested in providing pastoral care to seniors, homebound members, and singles, approx. 10 hrs/wk. please send your resume to:</p> <p>Hope CRC, 64 Buchanan Cres, Brantford ON N3P 2A5 attention: Audrey Reitsma by January 15, 2005 or email hopecrc@sympatico.com</p> <p>THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CAMPUS MINISTRY in Halifax is seeking applications for the position of chaplain at Dalhousie University.</p> <p>The ideal candidate will have a graduate degree and experience in engaging contemporary culture from a Reformed theological perspective.</p> <p>For more information, job description and profile please contact:</p> <p>Pastor Paul Vanderkooy 29 Hardwoodlands Road, Milford, Nova Scotia B0N 1Y0 pvkooy@ns.sympatico.ca</p>
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CC is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>Please call 1-819-684-3959 100 free Dutch Books (Kuyper, Bavinck, Berkhouwer, Schilder, Dooyeweerd etc.) are available for pick-up at: Arend Geisterfer 28 Rue Osgood, Gatineau (Aylmer) QC J9H 1R7</p> 	<p>In 2 Cor. 4 we read that "the treasure was in jars of clay is the light which God makes to shine in our hearts. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." This light was evident in the life of Sheila Huitsing and shone especially bright during the last year of her life as she battled with cancer. The Lord took her away and she does not suffer anymore.</p> <p>SHEILA HUIJSING (Breukelman)</p> <p>died on Nov. 22 in Thunder Bay, Ont. She was laid to rest on Nov. 26, the day which would have been her 41st birthday.</p> <p>May the Lord be with Peter and his children: Cheyl, Andrea & Jason Veenstra, Deborah, Benjamin, Gregory. Sadly missed by her parents Gerry & Lena Breukelman (DeVries) and in-laws Heero & Klazien Huitsing (Heerema) and their extended families.</p> <p>The last couple of months Sheila listened often to the song "I can only imagine." The first lines of this song go as follows "I can only imagine, what it will be like, when I walk by your side. I can only imagine, what my eyes will see, when your face is before me." Sheila is no longer imagining, she is already experiencing all of this. God be praised for her life in which we so richly shared.</p> <p>Corr. address: Peter Huitsing, RR #6 Highway 130, Thunder Bay ON P7B 5N5</p> <p>PETER FEDDEMA</p> <p>After a life of faithfulness, Christ-like service, deep love and caring for his family and friends, our dear husband, father and Opa now rests in the loving arms of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He left his earthly journey on Sunday, November 28, 2004 in his 72nd year.</p> <p>Beloved husband of Wilhelmina Feddema for 4 years. Pre-deceased by his first loving wife Tina (1999). Loving father of Sid & Patty Feddema, Liz & Stuart Van Staaldin, Harold & Donna Feddema, Sandra Schouten & special friend John Wassenaar, Peter & Rhonda Feddema, Evelyn & Doug Douwes. Loving step-father to Helen & Jeff Adams, Wilma & Rick Dykstra, Ray & Janet Beldman, Joyce & Nick Renke. Cherished Opa to 23 grandchildren (Sean predeceased 1995), and 13 step-grandchildren.</p> <p>Peter will be sadly missed by his five brothers and three sisters, Shirley & Albert Van Belle, Joe & Sally Feddema, Jack & Grace Feddema, Bill Feddema (predeceased) & Sarah Riley (& husband Shannon), Rienk & Tinie Feddema, John & Femmie Feddema, Grace & Ray Ravensbergen and Anna Feddema.</p> <p>The Funeral Service was held at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church on Friday, December 3, 2004 at 11 a.m. Burial was at Grimsby Mountain Cemetery. Memorial donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation would be appreciated by the family. Arrangements entrusted to Stonehouse-Whitcomb Funeral Home, Grimsby (905-945-2755).</p> <p>Correspondence: 18 Northernbreeze St, Mt Hope ON L0R 1W0</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL</p> <p>is seeking applications for an administrator to begin August 1, 2005. The position is a 50% administrator / 50% teacher in junior or intermediate grades. Timothy Christian School is an interdenominational school with a Reformed perspective on Christian education. We are a dynamic school serving 110 students from Sr. kindergarten to grade 8, where the love for Christ is reflected in the care and compassion for it's students. The education and programs are of high calibre with a dedicated staff. Qualified individuals should send their resumes along with their philosophy of Christian education to:</p> <p>Principal Search Committee c/o Mr. Richard Ubbens 14 Ladywood Drive Etobicoke, Ontario M9V 1K9 416-991-7538 Email: rubbens@toronto.ca</p> <p><i>Application Deadline January 21, 2005</i></p> <p>School Information</p> <p>Timothy Christian School Website: www.timothycs.com 28 Elmhurst Drive, Toronto Ontario M9W 2J5 Telephone: 416-741-5770 Fax: 416-741-3359</p>

Job Opportunities/Classifieds

BULKLEY VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

a school of 400 students located in the scenic Bulkley Valley of B.C., invites applications for a **principal** at its elementary campus, effective August 1, 2005 (position involves some teaching time).

This campus has approximately 175 students from K-6.

Bulkey Valley Christian is a school rooted in the reformed tradition, but contains a diverse denominational mix.

Applications and inquiries for this position can be forwarded to:

Attn: Irene Bakker, Board of Directors Chair
Bulkey Valley Christian School Phone: 250-847-9833
PO Box 2117 Fax: 250-847-0184
Smithers BC V0J 2N0 Email: bvcselem@telus.net

Discovery Christian High School seeks its first Principal

The successful applicant will be an energetic and dynamic leader who is able to:

- ▶ articulate the Christian mission of the school
- ▶ enable young people to discover their talents and opportunities
- ▶ give leadership to a growing staff and student body
- ▶ provide students with an innovative and challenging curriculum

Qualifications:

- ▶ Master's degree (completed or in process)
- ▶ eligible for BC teaching certification
- ▶ administrative experience at the high school level

Discovery Christian High School is a joint venture of Vancouver Christian School and John Knox Christian School. DCHS will open in September, 2005 with Grades 9-11, adding Grade 12 in 2006. The campus is located in Burnaby. Initially, the principal will assume both administrative and teaching responsibilities.

Job description available upon request. Please submit your resume, statement of faith and references by January 15, 2005 to:

Mr. Gerald Ebbers, Search Committee
#56 - 1973 Winfield Drive
Abbotsford BC V3G 1K6

FULL-TIME SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Trenton Christian School

Trenton, a multi-denominational school is seeking a vibrant visionary for Administrator, commencing August 2005.

TCS is a CHI accredited school serving JK - Grade 8 which includes 246 students from 126 families and a faculty of 19.

Qualified individuals should send their resumes, along with their philosophy of Christian Education by January 7 to:

Rob DeVries, Board Chair,
Trenton Christian School

340 Second Dug Hill Rd, RR #4 Trenton ON K8V 5P7

Email - tcs@reach.net

Website - www.reach.net/~tcs

GEORGETOWN DISTRICT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is seeking applications for an **ADMINISTRATOR** to begin in August 2005.



GDCS currently serves 205 students from pre-school through Grade 8.

It is a fully interdenominational school, operated by the Georgetown District Christian School Society, and is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. GDCS is located in the heart of beautiful Halton Hills.

Applications will be accepted until January 3, 2005. Please forward your application or inquiries to:

Wilma Grin

13106 22nd Sideroad RR#1

Georgetown ON L7G 4S4

Ph: 905-877-8180

Website: www.gdcs.org

ABBOTSFORD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL JOB POSTINGS

Abbotsford Christian School, located in the Fraser Valley, is a well established, interdenominational school of 1000 students in three campuses: Elementary (pre K - grade 5), Middle (6 - 8) and Secondary (9 - 12). We are inviting applications for the following positions:

SUPERINTENDENT

This is a new position at ACS. The successful applicant will be the chief administrator of the school system and be directly responsible to the Board of Directors. This person will be:

- a mature, committed Christian with proven leadership abilities
- a leader with a strong vision for Christian education who is able to respond to current educational trends and apply them in light of the biblical perspective at ACS
- a visionary who can provide leadership in strategic planning and implement such plans
- a team player who will motivate, encourage, challenge, hold accountable and empower the principals and other senior administrators
- an articulate spokesperson for ACS

POSSIBLE OPENING FOR A SECONDARY PRINCIPAL

This person will be an experienced, qualified and enthusiastic leader who is deeply committed to Christian education and is excited about working as part of a leadership team.

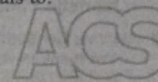
Application deadline: JANUARY 5, 2005

All positions commence August 2005. Applicants must be eligible for a valid BC College of Teacher's Certificate and meet the requirements of the ACS Employment Contract.

Please send resume, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian Education and credentials to:

SEARCH COMMITTEE, Abbotsford Christian School
35011 Old Clayburn Road, Abbotsford BC V2S 7L7

Contact: Sharon Vandenberg, Board Chair, at 604-820-0463, email: esvan@telus.net



The Board of Directors invites applications for the position of
PRINCIPAL

For 45 years John Knox Christian School has been dedicated to equip children for service in God's world through a Christ-centered education. Serving the Mississauga and Oakville community, we are a dynamic elementary school whose 365 students and their teachers reflect diversity

— both culturally and denominationally. Our parent volunteers passionately support the mission and operations of the school. We are blessed with an excellent facility and have established programs in the Arts, Library, Computers, Physical Education and Athletics, as well as for Special needs children.

Our committed faculty of 30 work collaboratively in the JK to Grade 6 areas together with our Curriculum Coordinators to develop our academic programmes. As a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, we are committed to the professional development of our staff who have an average of 8 years of service at JKCS. We are looking for a new Principal to carry on this tradition and provide leadership for the future.

The successful candidate should have the following characteristics:

- a personal faith which is evident in the way they live
- recognizes the Lordship of Christ over all creation including education
- a genuine love for students and the ability to listen empathetically
- strong people skills in dealing with teachers, staff, parents and community
- experience as an organized and capable administrator with good judgment
- a visionary who sees possibilities and empowers people to achieve them

Interested applicants who have or are working towards their Christian School Principal's Certificate should submit their resume along with a statement describing their philosophy of Christian Education by Jan. 7, 2005 to:

Laurie Atkins, Board Chair
John Knox Christian School
2232 Sheridan Garden Drive, Oakville ON L6J 7T1
tel: 905-829-8048 fax: 905-829-6056

e-mail: latkins@jkcs-oakville.org

Website: www.jkcs-oakville.org

Other Job Opportunities

GREENHOUSE VEGETABLE OPERATION

in Central Ontario is seeking an individual with greenhouse experience and leadership skills. The responsibilities would include supervision of up to 20 people and keeping production records. Argus control or other computer experience would be an asset.

Please fax resume to: 905-775-0011.
 Email to: foothill@neptune.on.ca

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File #2745
c/o Christian Courier, 1 Hiscott St.
St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

Classifieds/Advertising

Real Estate

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Bill Jongejan, Prudential Heartland Realty @ 1-888-482-3400
or 519-524-9859.

View these and other listings on the web site www.phr.on.ca



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Fax: 519-485-2103

email: jukema@lilbitcountry.ca



Arie Hoogerbrugge

Associate Broker

RE/MAX Del Mar Realty Inc.

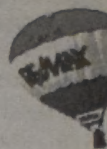
860 Queenston Road
Stoney Creek, ON L8G 4A8

Bus: 905-662-5300

Res: 905-945-3506

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Website: www.houseplus.com/ariehoogerbrugge



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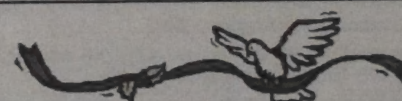
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Radio- From Coast to Coast

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burns Lake - CFLD	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos - CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni - CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George - CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers - CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland - CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	94

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray - CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River - CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton - CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock - CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan - CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn - CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona - CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach - CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg - CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan - CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCO	6:30 am	630
Guelph - CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing - CKAP	7:00 am	580
London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa - CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound - CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke - CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Samia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Tilsonburg - CKOT	9:02 am	101.3
Windsor - CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham - CKNX	10:30 am	920
Woodstock - CJFH	7:30 am	94.03

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630
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NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater - CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool - CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow - CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne - CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney - CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth - CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Windsor - CFAB	8:30 am	1450

TELEVISION Primary Focus

ON CTS Sat. - 7:30pm

AB Lethbridge - CJIL Thurs. - 9:00pm

Kids Corner
Radio

ALBERTA

Drayton Valley - CIBW	92.9 FM	Sun. 8:30 am
High River/Calgary	CHRB	1140 AM..Sun. 4:30pm
Nordegg	CHBW	93.9 FM.....Sun. 8:30 am
Rocky Mtn. House	CHBW	94.5 FM...Sun. 8:30 am

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Prince Rupert - CIAJ	100.7 FM	Sat. 10 am
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MANITOBA

Altona	CFAM	950 AM	Sun. 4 pm
Steinbach	CHSM	1250 AM	Sun. 4 pm

NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater	CKBW	1000 AM	Sun. 5:30 am
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ONTARIO

Oshawa	CKDO	1350 AM	Sat. 8 am
Woodstock	CJFH	94.3 FM	Sat. 8 am

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan	CJSL	1280 AM	Sun. 7 am
Weyburn	CJSL	1190 AM	Sun. 7 am



Web: www.backtogod.net/

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2005

News

CFFO celebrates 50 years



At a recent CFFO Provincial Council meeting, current president John Kikkert was joined by former presidents to help celebrate the Federation's 50 year anniversary. Pictured left to right are: Bob Bedggood (1998-2001), Jack VanderKooij (1989-1990), John Kikkert (2003-2004), Arend Streuter (1993), Jenny Denhartog (2002) and Bill Jongejan (1987-1988).

Over 2,000 farmers from across Ontario gathered in London on Nov. 25 and 26 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. Fifty years ago a dozen farmers from four local Christian farmers associations met in Strathroy to join forces and create the present CFFO.

These farmers, recent immigrants from the Netherlands, had brought with them a vision for organizing with an emphasis on faith and values, so that their activities would not be dominated by personalities or crass economic selfishness.

In his *Farm and Countryside Commentary* of Nov. 29, Elbert van Donkersgoed quotes from the minutes of that first meeting of 1954: "The president explains why we are gathered here, namely to work together more as Christian Farmers to carry out God's word also in Canada. Further, he proposes the establishment of a federation of Christian Farmers Association and puts this subject in discussion. Everyone feels the great need for this. But a big difficulty is that there are no people among us who are able to lead and who are able to explain the principles behind the idea. Nevertheless, all believed that we must begin. Even if we only establish the basis, then the next generation can already profit from this. The proposal of the president to establish a Federation was adopted by everyone, with the basis: 'The association is based on the conviction that the Holy Scriptures, as infallible Word of God, is the basis for the development of society.'"

He continues: "From that unpretentious beginning has emerged today's Christian Farmers Federation, with its emphasis on the importance of faith and values in guiding change in Ontario agriculture. CFFO has

maintained that rootedness in the Christian faith, in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and has become an articulate voice for family farmers with a vision for being a blessing for the whole food chain."

The new immigrant organization filled a very practical need – exchanging information on how best to farm in the new

country with its very different climate, but they were bound together above all by the Calvinist vision that faith is fundamental in all of life and work.

"There was no fanfare, no public announcement, not detailed plan of action, no articulate rationale for existence, no immediate impact on the development of community life," says the Feb. 2004 Newsletter. "There was only the fervency of a great need: a need to establish their work in agriculture as God's work."

A CFFO Bulletin dated March 1968 stated: Christian farmers should organize because they have a common base, a common line of thought. Sometimes people get the idea that we are organizing as Christian farmers because of some supposed danger to our Christian principles, to protect ourselves, our common interest, or maybe even the church.

"Our Christian community has realized its duty to protect the rights of individuals and certainly the CFFO has a duty here. But in the first place we organize because we have something to contribute. Because we feel that our approach is the right one to accomplish our goal – which is to obtain a fair and just share of the wealth of our country for our agricultural producer and to help him find a meaningful place in the economy and society of our country."

Over the 50 years of its existence that has all changed. The CFFO has developed policy options on various kinds of legislation, contributed toward the preservation of farmland and land-use planning, and has been a leader in studying environmental stewardship programs.

To help celebrate their 50th anniversary, the CFFO called on its members to donate 50 bushels of corn or grain to the Canadian Food Grains Bank, which the federal government matches on a 4:1 ratio.

Mailboxes of CFFO members



Windsor, Ontario

Oxford, Ontario



Oxford, Ontario



Shalom



Shalom



Serving God through farming

Having Jesus as the Lord of life seems like a simple statement, but it has made a big impact on how members view themselves, and how their collective work has impacted the province. On the personal level, CFFO members believe they are stewards of God's gifts of land, animals, and the environment. On the collective level, they also believe that public policy for farming starts at the grassroots level, among farmers, and moves all the way up to the nation's elected officials. As a result, the CFFO has made important contributions to a host of public policy issues ranging from the protection of farmland to projects aimed at helping farmers in their efforts to be good stewards of the environment.

CFFO members have often noted that they need to be good students of both the world and the Word, in order to make a contribution in God's world.

Christian farmers believe their primary task in farming is to study the Creation and discover its rhythms and patterns. With hearts open to God, farmers look out upon the world, observe its patterns and turn their hands towards creative activity. No amount of personal piety will

make up for the lack of paying attention to those basics.

In addition, Christian farmers believe they need to be good students of public policy instruments like marketing legislation and land use planning provisions. Finally, there are observations about the nature of farmers themselves, their skill groupings and whether they respond better to incentives or regulations.

Ontario's Christian farmers try to look upon the Creation with their Bibles in hand. In the pages of scripture we see God's intention to bless the people of the earth through sun and rain in due season, through social mechanisms like Jubilee, and ultimately through our Savior Jesus Christ. And we see that God's main way of working in the world today is through his body, the church. He works his will through ordinary Christians like you and me.

There is much more to the story of the CFFO, but faith in God and stewardship under his direction have been consistent motivations over its 50-year history.

From the CFFO Newsletter, May 2004

FROM THE "IT MAY NOT HELP THE ECONOMY, BUT IT MIGHT DO WONDERS FOR OUR CHILDREN" DEPT.

